

TOM WILKINS

By J. T. GIBBS

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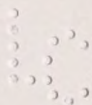
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TOM WILKINS

A Story of School Management
and Supervision.

By J. T. GIBBS.



OKAWVILLE -:- ILLINOIS

J. T. GIBBS

1913

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To the vast army of worthy young people who are striving against adverse circumstances to acquire an education, and to their worthy friends, the big-hearted teachers, this volume is respectfully dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

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TOM WILKINS.

CHAPTER I.

TOM'S YOUTH, SCHOOL DAYS AND DEVELOPMENT INTO A PEDAGOGUE.

In a quiet little village in one of the southern counties of the great State of Illinois, where the inhabitants came in contact with the great round bustling world very seldom, and where you would least expect to find anything out of the ordinary, lived a family of man and wife and six healthy children. Their home was a log cabin, and was as humble as could be conceived. In the edge of a great forest which still held sway on one side of the village and came within its corporate limits, stood the little cabin in which, with the other members of the family, lived a small boy—the hero of this story, if indeed he may be called a hero; you must answer that after you have finished the perusal of these pages—at least the boy without whose

existence these pages would never have been written.

He was not an extraordinarily bright boy, but possessed habits, or rather acquired them, of carefulness and earnestness in his work. His father was a mechanic and knew the value of training his boys to do something well. Therefore our hero early had tasks assigned him, and was held strictly accountable for their faithful performance. He was not permitted to go skating with the other boys of his age, for instance, until his kindling was in the wood-shed and enough wood split to fill the requirements for the day. In the summer time he was permitted to enjoy the pastimes of fishing, bathing, boating, etc., after his chores were properly performed.

Ye, whose minds are pedagogically inclined, pause a moment and think whether this discipline was not the very best to bring out whatever there may have been good in that young and growing character. Think whether or not this discipline was the cause of the formation of habits of industry and carefulness that should be useful ever after.

As before stated, the father was a mechanic, but nevertheless the family lived poorly enough, for the opening of our story was in that period of financial depression and uncertainty immediately following the great Civil War. It was "nip and tuck" to secure the necessities and a few of the comforts of life, while the luxuries were not to be thought of except as something inaccessible to their humble station.

It was in these circumstances that we find our hero, Tom Wilkins, an unassuming, only semi-attractive boy about nine years old. It was as one of the plainest dressed boys in the school that he was found daily in his seat and at work. Hard work it was for the frugal parents to furnish him the necessary books and supplies. But he toiled away and kept up with his classes, having become so accustomed to his patched trousers that they did not keep him from reciting his lessons as well as any in the class. While his condition was not much worse than that of a great many others in the school, it was as bad as any, and there were a few of the sons and daughters of luxury in the same school who seemed to think that the sole object for which

schools were established was that they might show their fine clothes, and in this they were often encouraged by their indulgent parents. For a time this worried Tom, but a lucky promotion from one class to another for meritorious work, and a kindly, sensible talk by the teacher on the merits of earnest work, and how industrious effort will win its way whether the worker wears fine clothes or not, caused him to get the germ of an idea into his head that maybe he could be of some usefulness, in spite of his humble situation.

Of course the teacher touched rather lightly upon the subject of fine clothes, and probably but few of the pupils besides Tom got the point.

The teacher herself was attired very plainly, and owing to circumstances which she had never been able to control, had always been so, even her "Sunday Best" being quite plain in the eyes of the world.

It was this feeling of fellowship between her and Tom as much as anything else that caused her to allude to it at all, and the reason she did not impress the point more closely than she did, was, perhaps, because some of the best dressed

children in the school were from influential families, and if they should carry home a tale, as children will, and distort it somewhat, as children will, and make the parents believe that the teacher had set a special merit upon rags and kept their pupils from progressing just because they wore better clothes than the teacher did, she might be in danger of being called down by the aforesaid parents, as well as of losing her position, in which event her own clothing would necessarily become plainer and less plentiful besides. Oh, how often the dread of losing our positions causes us to do things we ought not to do, or not to do things that we know to be our duty!

Tom often felt depressed, however, but it always had the effect of causing him to resolve to do something and be something in this world, and to better his own condition if studious habits would help him any. And he was convinced that they would. What a victory it is for a boy to come to the thought that he can by his own individual efforts make his life easier and more useful!

We have now passed over a period of Tom's

life which was spent in the elementary branches of study, and find him a boy of fifteen, fairly proficient in the common branches, and anxious to see into some of the elementary sciences. His close proximity to the true field of scientific investigation—the wild and natural forest and the undulating meadow land—was of inestimable value to him. For when he had his first lessons in Natural History, he perceived that some one had only written down in a book what he, himself, had observed many a time in the woods.

During some of his leisure time he took occasion to look over a copy of a work on animals, and hunted out the treatises on those with which he was most familiar, and was much pleased and stimulated to find that his first impressions of Natural History were correct.

Tom had had a hard struggle, but now he had the satisfaction of knowing that he was one of the best pupils in the school. When, the next year, two of his school-mates entered college, they left the highest place to Tom. He had some feelings of regret at not being able to follow them, but he knew that was impossible, for the family, while in some better circumstances,

were still poor, and could not spare the money necessary to go to college, where train-fare, books, board and better clothes would be expensive.

The teacher who had had charge of the village school for several years was a man of fairly good training, who had been educated in one of the eastern cities and brought with him some new ideas on teaching, and some of these impressed Tom, who had now arrived at the age of observation. One of these points was the close analysis of problems in Arithmetic. His everlasting "Why?" in every process became just a bit monotonous at times, and had bored many a pupil to the point of disgust, but now Tom saw that that was a good thing, and he began to see the work of a teacher in a different light.

He saw that a teacher might be of great help to a pupil by causing him to find out things for himself, and that that process would make the pupil really more able to help himself. One other good trait about this teacher was his utter disregard of the pupil's station in life. The finest dressed pupil in the room was no more to him than the boy in rags, it was the intellectual

ability and industry of the child that won honors. He had a way of stating this fact, too, that made Tom feel happy. He would often say:

“Now, boys, it does not matter in the least to me what your circumstances of life may be, whether you be wealthy or poor, whether you be well dressed or ragged, you may learn and learn well if you apply yourselves to the task before you. You must remember that there is no royal road to knowledge, but all must pay the price of an education, and that price is hard work.”

Facts which are strictly true and which added to Tom's determination to do something and to be something in this world yet in spite of his humble birth.

This teacher, while he had high ideals of teaching, was still of the old school, and believed that to spare the rod is to spoil the child, and acting on that theory many a time and often did he administer to the lads of that school the necessary chastisement which must come when “forbearance ceases to be a virtue,” as he often stated just previous to wielding the birch over the unlucky shoulders of some urchin who had

broken some minor rule of the school.

And, as will always be the case, certain of the urchins who had been chastised for things that justly called for punishment, and while still smarting under the lash, discovered that they could torment their teacher, and studied up a variety of mischievous little tricks, which, while they were not positive violations of any set rules, were still vexatious, and as a result of these little tricks, scarcely a day went by without one or more of the boys receiving a sound trouncing, which as time went on got to be very monotonous and ineffectual to a degree.

Tom often wondered if there were not some other way of keeping boys in line than by continually flogging them. And while he had, himself, not altogether escaped chastisement, still he had not suffered severely, he wondered if a great deal of it were not a waste of time and temper.

One other point Tom gained from this particular instructor, who, while he was one of the best that had ever taught in that community, was somewhat of a politician, as we have been told every teacher must be who holds any given po-

sition for any considerable number of years, and often mixed with the promiscuous population and indulged in the sports and pastimes of many of those who seemed to have no other purpose in life than to get all the amusement possible out of existence. And, naturally, their style of amusement led them to social games, and the social glass followed, and our teacher who was a model in many respects, fell into temptation and often came to school blear-eyed, and with a strong scent of alcohol pervading his immediate atmosphere, as a result of the previous evening's debauchery.

Tom was of an age now to notice these things, and unlike some boys of that critical period of life, instead of having a desire to do as his teacher did, he mentally condemned such practices, and resolved that if he ever taught school—and the thing was beginning to so far shape itself in his mind that it was no longer among the improbabilities—he would never permit his pupils to detect the scent of alcohol on his breath.

This teacher, being, as we have said, somewhat of a politician, and seeing that his style of

government, while correct in theory and strict enough to produce good effects, was at the same time alienating the affections of a number of those who had smarted most under the lash in the earlier years of his rule, and they were now growing into manhood, and would soon be eligible to vote for school-directors, and would, in all probability, one of these days, elect a board that would replace him with another teacher, not because he was no longer efficient, but just because they held a sort of grudge against him for old memories' sake, and would get even with him at the first opportunity.

When this condition dawned upon the unlucky pedagogue, he redoubled his attentions to the social table and the social glass in the hope of overcoming the influence of these boys, or of winning them over to his side in case a contest came which might involve his position, doing many times what his better judgement told him was wrong, and partaking of the vulgar jokes of those whom he designed to win. But true to the social rules of this life, when a good man espouses evil for the purpose of making it better, or more subservient to him, the reverse oc-

curs, and the evil gets control of him and uses him for its purposes.

So a few more terms along this vacillating course, paying about as much attention to local politics as to his school, and the crash came, and a board was elected that was expected to leave him out in the cold, cold world. Ah, yes, but such had been his partisan services that one of the officers at the county seat called him to be his deputy, and from that he developed into a county politician and secured one of the offices for himself and, running the whole gamut of wickedness and debauchery, became popular for a time with certain classes of "politicians," who in this particular county, as in many another, have more than their share of political influence. But even such influences lose their potency after a time, and our former respectable teacher finds himself a political outcast. Oh, yes, but he can get a school, as one of his friends said to him soothingly when the convention turned him down. Such is too often the opinion, that when a man runs out of everything else, he can teach school! A fine commentary on you, my worthy pedagogical friend

who really spend your time in improving your mind and your usefulness!

But let us not leave our unfortunate teacher without again referring to his school work. At a time when his political enemies were pressing him hardest, trying to elect a board that should displace him, he had a confidential talk with Tom, and advised him to take the County Superintendent's examination, and secure a license to teach. He was sure that Tom could pass. He had a two-fold object in thus luring Tom on and he hoped that he would respect his wishes in the matter, and he really felt certain that Tom would pass, for he was easily the brightest pupil in the school, and the superintendent was a new incumbent and felt grateful to this particular community, for his majority had been larger here than in any other part of the county, and the superintendent was to a considerable extent indebted to this very teacher-politician for a good part of that majority. Besides, it would be quite an advertisement for the teacher to have one of his "boys" pass the examination and receive a license to teach, having learned it all in that particular school presided over by

that particular teacher. See?

The other object he had in view was to bind the influence of Tom's father in the approaching school election. Did you ever know affairs to take such a turn as that in any other community? Yea, verily, if you have ever been on the "inside track."

Tom told his father about his teacher's advice, but as the family could not easily spare the money necessary to fit him out in a new suit of clothes and pay his transportation expenses and examination fee, the matter was dropped for that time.

In the mean time the spring approached, and, as Tom was now of a size to be of considerable use to his father, he was put to work, and he it said to his credit, made a good summer of it, and in the fall had enough pocket money to keep him through the winter. When the fall term of school opened Tom was ready with his books and one of the first to greet his new teacher.

In getting acquainted with his pupils this new teacher took an inventory of the various books used by the various pupils, and not having a

classification record of any kind, had to plod along the best he could and trust to luck as much as to sense to locate the pupils properly. Have you ever done the same? All right, then, you know all about it.

When he came to Tom's list, he noted: 1 Ray's Higher Arithmetic, 1 Tenny on Animals, 1 Physical Geography, 1 Steele's Fourteen Weeks in Philosophy, 1 General History, 1 Brief History of the U. S., 1 Clark's Normal Grammar, and the list caused him to open his eyes in delight for he had hoped he would have an advanced class to teach in order that he might become more proficient in those branches himself. Of course the old maxim is true that by teaching others we also improve ourselves, and it is right that we should grow more proficient in a branch that we are teaching; but is it quite right for us to undertake to teach a branch of which we know but very little, in order to become proficient? Well you have your standard of the ethical side of this question and I have mine and I hope we are willing to let it go at that. I am, are You?

This teacher was willing to let it go at that, and would have gladly done so, had he not dis-

covered that there was one book which he had neglected to take note of. And that was an Algebra, What a dark scowl covered those already dark features, for this new teacher had never looked inside of an Algebra. And there suddenly loomed up before him the possibility of not being able to handle the subject at all, and what humiliation for him in the eyes of the school and the community to be forced to admit that Tom Wilkins was somewhat proficient in a single branch that the teacher knew nothing of!

He was not long in making up his mind what to do, however, and quietly informed Tom that he was already so far advanced that it was next to a waste of time for him to go to that school, and if he were in Tom's place he would try to go to some college or high school. A slick way out of it! Give him credit for his sagacity.

It had the effect on Tom that it was intended to have, for while the teacher was not well up in Algebra, he was almost a Past-Master in the study of human nature. Tom lost control of himself temporarily and really believed that he was too smart to go to that school. When he went home he told his father about the occur-

rence. The proposition to go away to school could not be thought of. There was some more work to do and Tom could help do it. This he did, and as he did everything else, did it well.

When the fall work was finished, Tom shouldered his ax and went to the woods, and helped get up enough wood to last the next summer, enjoying the diversion very much. A good number of hunters going by where Tom was at work, caused him to think some of trying his luck in pursuit of game. He procured a gun and the necessary accoutrements and started out for game. Luckily or unluckily for him the game seemed quite shy and his usual day's killing scarcely paid for his ammunition, while he was putting in his full time and sole-leather, to boot. Being somewhat philosophically inclined, he soon figured that he was constantly playing a losing game.

The winter was far spent. Tom had often thought of his books, though he had studied but very little. But the thought of the approaching examination, and the knowledge that some of his young friends were going to try the terrible ordeal, caused him to debate with himself

whether or not he should do the same. He decided that he would, and from that day on he worked busily, reviewing everything that he had ever studied and learning many things that he had never studied.

Examination day came at last. Tom was there ready for the work, with his mind carefully stored with everything that he thought the superintendent would ask about. For he had been warned that he would have to meet the superintendent on his own ground, and might expect to "run up against" several things he had never heard of before. And he did! And he failed. And that failure was the making of him for school work. For it caused him to set a resolution to have that certificate yet. And you know that when we really desire a thing in an educational line we are on a good road to secure it.

So Tom went to work again, not so much because he wanted to enter the profession as to demonstrate his ability to pass a successful examination. He worked day and night with an earnestness he had never before felt, and at the end of another month was ready for work again

on those dreadful examination questions.

He had profited greatly by his former examination and guarded against such mistakes as were due to carelessness or overconfidence, concluding that it would be impossible to make his statements too plain, as the examiner must take the answers for what they said to him. It dawned upon him that although he knew a thing perfectly well, the examiner could not give him credit for it unless he told it in unmistakable language. This precaution was worth a great deal to him, for he went home from that examination feeling much better, but at the same time doubtful as to whether he had passed.

After a tedious wait of about two weeks Tom was gratified to receive his first certificate to teach school in the county of his birth. Happy, well yes. You know just how it was if you have ever been there; but if you have not you will be obliged to use your imagination to come to some realization of how he felt, and then you will only partially know.

It is safe to say that this first certificate gave him more real pleasure than any that he ever received afterward, though he was destined to re-

ceive several others and of higher grade than this one. It is just as Pope says, "tickled with a straw." But as straws show which way the wind is blowing, so this straw showed which way this youth was tending.

His parents were proud of him, his friends congratulated him, while some of his slightly jealous school friends called him "Professor," thus early in life. Such a habit people have of bandying that worthy appellation which only a few may wear worthily! These things bothered him little, however. His practical turn of mind soon put him to looking for a school.

He interviewed several directors of district schools, finally placing his application with a newly-elected board in a newly-organized district. He waited patiently, and now that he had gone so far in search of a school, he would often lie awake at night and dream himself successful, and even began to plan what he would do with his first month's salary, which, if he received the amount he asked for, would be the biggest thing financially he had ever attained to. Ah, those waking dreams, how they do affect us!

After reviewing the penurious life he had

lived, the prospect of drawing a stated sum and so large a one from the public treasury every month, and that during the winter months, during which time he had formerly earned nothing, was to him a bright prospect indeed. We wonder if all teachers have not had just about such dreams during the period from the time the first precious certificate arrived to the time of spending the salary.

One day Tom was met by a member of the aforesaid board of directors, who said to him :

“Well, Tom, the board had a meeting, and agreed to hire you to teach our school next winter, to begin the first Monday in October and continue five months. We fixed your salary at thirty dollars a month, the amount you asked for.”

“Thank you, very much,” said Tom, “I am sure I shall try my very best to teach you a good school. I shall be ready when the time arrives.”

“Oh, we don’t doubt,” said Mr. Director, “that you will do all right. You see ours is only a small school, and most anybody could teach it, but the law makes us hire some one who has a certificate ”

If Tom had been vain, this conversation would have had a tendency to relieve him of some of his vanity, but he said:

“While I am very glad to know that I have the school, just out of curiosity, I should like to know whether there were any other applications for that school.”

“Oh, yes, there were a number of applications.”

“Might I ask,” said Tom, “how it happened that I, who have never taught, was selected from the list and awarded the school?”

“Oh, well, you see, your bid was the lowest, and the board thought that in justice to the taxpayers, they ought to let the job out to the lowest bidder. There was one application from a teacher who has taught five years and some of the board favored him, but his bid was for thirty-one dollars, and we gave the school to you.”

What a fall was taken out of Tom’s vanity, if he had any, for he had rather thought that the director would say something about having known him a long time, and knowing him to be a diligent student and one who wanted to do what is right, had given him the school on his

merits. But now the secret was out. He was hired simply because his bid was the lowest! He found later in life that while this was a young school board, being the first in the new district, they had acted along the very lines that govern many an old board that has hired teachers for a quarter of a century.

This gave Tom something to think about for some time, and he did not like the thought the best in the world, either. But like many another teacher—yourself, perhaps, for instance—he finally allowed the thought to smother away, concluding that as he had contracted to teach the school he should be as good as his word. And besides, if he did not take this one, where would he secure one, and would he get any better salary?

CHAPTER II.

TEACHING HIS FIRST SCHOOL.

The first Monday in October came and Tom was ready to go to his work. He had looked forward to the time with pleasant anticipations for many months, and pictured himself starting off sprightly in the balmy air of a bright October morning, with the last birds of the season chirruping merrily as he sped along the road that led down to District 6.

Alas! how many of our hopes are in vain! How often we picture coming events as we would have them, only to find them, when we do come to them, entirely different from what we had expected.

This was Tom's fate. For this first Monday in October was a dull, cool, rainy, drizzling day, that would take the heart out of the bravest. Tom trudged along as merrily as possible, but the road was muddy and the nearly three miles to the school house seemed to him much farther. Several times he sat down to rest, not being ac-

customed to that kind of physical exercise, but he would get up quickly and start on with the thought that they (his pupils) would all be there waiting for him, and he did not want to be late the first day.

Tom arrived at the school house in good time, found himself the only one present for it was yet a full half-hour until the time for beginning the exercises of the day. Placing the key with-the lock, he opened the door for the first time to take charge of a school as the master thereof. He threw open the shutters and proceeded to make a fire in a little coal stove that was to do duty for several years.

Every nook and corner of the cozy little room received attention, and plans were being made for the work of the classes, but not a pupil had yet arrived. The fire had burned readily and he threw open the stove door and taking a chair sat down before the cheerful blaze to await developments. He had not waited long before the door opened timidly and in came a little boy about seven years old with a book, a slate and a little dinner pail. At least he should not have to spend the day alone. He proceeded to get ac-

quainted with the boy, who though very backward, was still interesting. He greeted him with a cheerful "Good Morning, little boy," and received in reply a very respectful "Guten Morgen, Herr Lehrer."

So now they were acquainted, and Tom was acquainted with a fact he had evidently never taken into consideration, and that was the possibility that most of his pupils would probably speak a different tongue from his own.

Presently two little girls came to the school, and that number were all that registered in District No. 6 on that first day of the first school the district ever saw.

Tom talked to the pupils quite a good deal, one of the girls speaking his language quite well, and thus improved his acquaintance. The rain, which had been a drizzle in the morning, came down heavily toward noon, so that one of the patrons came just at noon to bring a pail of dinner to the little girl who lived upon the hill near the school house, but who would have been drenched had she been permitted to go home for her dinner.

The exercises of the day consisted chiefly in

reading by the one pupil who could read a little and attempts at mastering the alphabet by the other two. For Tom was not a Normal graduate and did not know that is not proper to teach the alphabet the first thing. He was taught that way, and all the teaching he had seen was done that way. He did not debate with himself whether that were the right way. He just took it as a matter of fact and proceeded to help them master the twenty-six letters with which they would have to work all the rest of their natural days, if they did anything in a literary line.

Notwithstanding that it all went slowly and oddly enough, this first day finally ended, and at four o'clock Tom closed the shutters and started for home through more mud than he had encountered on the morning trip. For Tom boarded at home. His plan was to make the trip out and back every day. What a blessing to a teacher to be able to board at home!

Though Tom did not know this, he escaped the many ills that itinerant teachers are heirs to. For he had not taken up lodgings with one side of the district to the disgust of the other side who might think that he should have boarded

with them. Many of you who read these pages know something about this to your sorrow, do you not?

Perhaps, gentle reader, you think too much prominence has been given to this first day in a school of only three pupils. We do not think so, for, since the day of his birth, this was the most important day in Tom's life, and the memory of it has lived with him much more minutely than is here chronicled, forming a bright spot to which the mind might revert when greater cares held him in their power, always with pleasure and amusement.

The days passed on smoothly enough. The school filled up more in a few days, though the enrollment did not exceed a score during the entire term. Tom often wished that he might have a larger school, not fully realizing what a blessing it was to him to have plenty of time to fix his habits of teaching rightly, and devote as much time as he found to each individual pupil. His opportunity for observing the results of his methods was good and he profited greatly by it.

The matter of discipline was of the least concern to him, for his pupils were all of German

descent, and many of them the children of parents who had crossed the briny deep to find homes in this free America, and had settled in this newly-opened district to work out their fortunes by tilling the virgin soil. They had brought over with them the ideas of the prominence of that worthy person, the "Herr Lehrer," that they had been trained to recognize in the Fatherland.

So Tom found his pupils most respectful and obedient. Every evening they took their books home with them, and gathered around the table after the supper dishes were cleared away by the careful housewife and her helpful girls, they learned their lessons for the next day. Under these circumstances, it is little wonder that Tom found his school progressing very nicely, and was often surprised to see how well they had done when he assigned them harder lessons than usual.

Of course, he received very little help from the members of the families at the pupils' homes, except in the way of encouragement, for very few of them were any more proficient in the English language than the children were.

But on the other hand, he did not find his work meddled with by over-officious parents, or his methods criticised by persons who were no better trained than he was. He had full swing and was heartily supported in whatever he undertook to do.

Do you wonder that under these circumstances Tom was able to do a great deal of good in this community? Later in life he found himself in circumstances where he knew the unlimited support of the patrons of the school would increase his usefulness ten-fold. And his mind ran back with grateful thoughts to District 6. How glad he was that his first few years of teaching were spent in that community. For if he had encountered some of the things that crossed his path later in life, before he had acquired such a deep and lasting love for teaching, he must certainly have given it up as a bad job.

But in gliding a bit into the future as a point from which to look back at Tom, we must not forget that bright sunny days did come in that delightful month of October. Days when his heart was light and he sped along the country road cheerfully and as happy as ever he found

himself even in much more exalted positions later in life.

A meeting of the County Teachers' Association attracted his attention. He thought that it would be a good thing for him to attend, and besides the Superintendent had said that these meetings were full of good things for young teachers as well as for older ones.

He arrived at the county seat in company with a number of other teachers full of anxiety to know what there was there for him. With both eyes and both ears open, he entered the strange room timidly, and seeing the room quite well filled with persons nearly every one strangers to him, and the exercises being in progress, he slunk down into the first seat he came to and sat as still as his agitated nervous system would permit him to.

He felt very much out of place and could scarcely get the run of the high-flown statements that were being made by Professor So-and-So, who, it seemed to Tom, had had a world of experience, and made statements that were wholly incomprehensible to Tom. He told just how to do things in ways that Tom did not under-

stand, for he had been engrossed in his own humble work under circumstances that were in some particulars different from those of most every other school in the county.

Isn't it true that each individual school is a little different from every other school in some of its particulars, notwithstanding the fact that certain general observations may be made for all?

The afternoon session proved more interesting to Tom, partially because some of the talks were more in line with something that he knew something about, and partially because he felt a little easier after getting acquainted with a number of the teachers. Taking it all through, the day seemed profitable to him, if for no other reason than that he saw there was a great gulf between him and some of the older teachers who wore the appellation "Professor,"

While at this meeting he heard some of the teachers discussing privately the merits and demerits of the meeting, some of them expressing themselves contemptuously and giving him the impression that they would not have been there if they were not afraid the Superintendent would not be pleased, and perhaps give them

a little uneasiness about the renewal of their certificates. Some also thought that Professor So-and-So had just tried to "show off" and make people believe that he was smarter than he really was, intimating that what he had said contained a good deal of theory which he had never had really tried himself, and had only guessed what effect it would have on a school; that his school was not so much better than others after all.

All these things caused Tom to think, and really that is one of the best things for us to do. It is those things that make us think most that are most valuable to us. He did not know but that if he attended many meetings he might become critical as some of these teachers were, but he tried to resolve in his heart that he would never attend any meeting just because the superintendent might wish him to, or might be displeased if he did not. If he could find no higher motive than that he thought he had better stay at home. What think you, gentle reader?

One impression that Tom took home with him was worth the trip. That was a realization of his own unpreparedness when compared with

others to whom he had listened. This realization caused him to make a resolution that he would let no time pass in trying to become bigger in an educational sense. He resolved to take up a course of study and prosecute it as thoroughly as he could. Besides, he sat down at once and wrote an order for a school journal that had been recommended to him by the superintendent. Every evening after supper he might be found at his desk digging away at some abstruse problem in mathematics, or following out some campaign in history, or trying to solve the riddle of some intricate analysis in grammar.

When the first number of his school journal arrived, he proceeded to see what was in it. He read every word in it, even to the advertisements, before the end of the week. In the advertising columns, he found mentioned several helps that he thought would be useful to him in his work, and a few books on teaching. Another order was the result, and soon he had the beginning of a pedagogical library which has since grown in size until it contains the best thoughts of ancient and modern educators.

From one number of his school journal he got the idea that a small library in his school would be of great benefit to his pupils, as well as to help him to make the work interesting. He secured a list of books adapted to pupils of the various grades, and selected from it a few books and bought them for the school. He selected only a few books for he expected to pay for them himself, and while his prospective salary had seemed very large to him, the real salary was not so big as he had expected, after his expenses were paid. This was the beginning of a library that has since been greatly augmented, and which has had a great influence over the inhabitants of that district for a number of years.

So the winter months wore away pleasantly. Tom was never absent from his school, or tardy, although some of the mornings were bitterly cold or dreadfully rainy. He knew that when he once reached the school house he could soon have a cheerful fire and settle himself for an agreeable day.

As the spring began to approach and also the time when he should close his first term of school, he received notice that he had been as-

signed a subject on the program for the next meeting of the County Teachers' Association by a committee, as he afterward learned, who desired to initiate some of the new recruits, as well as to give a part of the time to the older "Professors." This was quite a surprise to Tom, who, at first thought, was sure he could never face that august body of teachers and say anything at all. Why he had been almost too timid to even enter the room at the last meeting!

After thinking over the matter a few days, he began to be less timid and really decided that he would write something on the subject and see how it would sound to himself when read. He had had considerable composition work to do while in school, and found writing a rather pleasant task, though he knew his flow of language was not the choicest. Still he went to work, and at the end of a few days had prepared an article of several pages which pleased him greatly. He read it over often, and became quite familiar with its contents, when, one day, the thought came to him that it would be just as easy for him to commit the article to memory and recite it to them. This he decided to do.

During the noon hour he often strolled down the road for recreation. About a quarter of a mile north of the school house was a small wooden bridge over a little stream, where he had often sat for a quarter of an hour in the bright sunlight of the lengthening spring days. Here he went to rehearse his "piece," with the weeds and dry stalks of last year's corn crop as his auditors. Over and over he repeated it until every line was perfectly familiar to him.

When the day for the meeting of the Association arrived, he was at the station with others waiting for the train to bear them to the county seat. This time he entered the room in which the meeting was held much less timidly than before. As he watched the program, he saw that his time to "perform" would soon arrive, and the thought of it made him shiver. Have you ever been there? Well, you know all about it.

Presently the president called his name. He stood up mechanically, advanced nervously to the front of the room, turned facing the assembled teachers and thought that he must fall, and might have done so but he had stopped just in

front of the first row of seats, and by a lucky accident got his knee against the seat and braced himself. He began timidly, and spoke rather rapidly at first (just as you did, perhaps, your first time) but got better command of himself as he proceeded, finishing without a break and seating himself, red-faced and perspiring, amid the applause of the whole assembly. Be it said that the applause was as much due to the youthfulness of the performer as it was to the performance itself.

This little incident put him in a good frame of mind so that he got much more out of what was said afterward than he did out of anything that had been said while he was waiting to advance to the "firing-line," as the soldiers put it. He carried away some good impressions from that meeting, some that were of real value to him, for a great many of the rank and file of the teachers had told of their experiences, and they were so much like some of his own that he felt greatly encouraged by them.

But time rushed on relentlessly, as it has a distressing habit of doing. (It will depend somewhat upon your own individual age wheth-

er you fully appreciate this statement or not. If you are young and gay and anxious to arrive at at the perfection of manhood or womanhood at the earliest possible moment, you may not think the statement is entirely true, but if you have passed a score and a half of years and find silver threads glistening among the black, brown, yellow, golden hairs—I don't know what color they are on your individual head, but you do—you know too well that the above statement is vividly and distressingly true; that you are rushing onward in your career with your life-work only partially finished.)

Well, as we said, time rushed on and the last day of Tom's first term of teaching was rapidly approaching, was really present, and he was turning the key the other way in the lock that secured the front door, and going out into the wide world again, just as you have done after every term you have ever taught, and will continue to do if you continue to teach.

Tom's directors gave him his last order, and told him that they wanted him to come back in the fall and teach their school another term. He felt very grateful for this recognition of his

work, and promised them to do so, and thus ended his first experience as a teacher. If that had ended his career, this history would never have been written.

CHAPTER III.

INTRODUCTION TO A COURSE OF STUDY, SOME
ADVICE.

Tom spent the summer at work. But he also found time to study, and often reviewed the work of the previous winter in the little school in District 6. He saw several points that could be improved upon another year, and by careful reading of school journals and works on pedagogy, he began to shape his plans for the next year.

While industriously employed during the day, he found a great deal of time for study during evenings, and many an hour was spent over the writing table that stood beside the improvised book-case that occupied one corner of his bedroom. Still as busy as he was, he found time to attend the County Institute that was held at the county seat for one week. This was full of thought and inspiration for him. The superintendent was a kind, mild-mannered gentleman, who, while he was a very good officer, still had about him an air of uncertainty, and would

often remark, when touching upon a point that had been brought to his attention :

“Well, now, I am not quite sure about that matter. It seems to me that is correct, but I shall have to look it up again when I go to the office.”

This uncertainty gave Tom another thought. If those who are at the head of the educational system of the county are in doubt and uncertain as to various things pertaining to the schools and education, it was entirely excusable in him to be somewhat in doubt himself. But the thought rather stimulated than discouraged him. He thought that while he might go through life in doubt on some points, there were still many others of which he could be certain.

The instructors who were employed to work in this Institute were good, earnest school-men ; men ripe in experience ; men who had given the best years of their lives in solving the problems of education ; men whose characters were pure and whose motives were lofty. And while they had not yet arrived at a panacea for all the ills to which educators are natural heirs, they had undoubtedly made the way easier by giving

largely of their experience for the guidance of the younger teachers.

It is true that there seemed to be an air of partiality for the graded schools, and it seemed to Tom that a great many things were shown to the primary teachers, and to the teachers of the —th grades, that on account of the elaborateness of detail with which they were given, were next to impracticable in a rural school of mixed grades, and especially in one where the matter of grading the school had been neglected by the teacher in a desire to get at each pupil individually.

Of course, come to think of it, Tom's school was partially graded, and he began to wonder if he could not increase his own efficiency by trying to get nearer some recognized standard. But how to proceed; that was what puzzled him. He thought that he might gain some points by asking other teachers what they were doing. After interviewing several, he discovered that there were no two alike. While one teacher has his third reader pupils doing work in fractions, another was still wrestling with multiplication and division with pupils of the same age. While

one teacher had his third year pupils handling an elementary text in geography and reading some delightful historical stories as supplementary work, another was devoting his entire energies to the three R's.

This information left Tom somewhat confused. He wondered if there were not a true standard of advancement somewhere, that should be logical and pedagogical, and he wondered, too, how far he was from the standard.

What a glorious thing it was for Tom that these reflections came to him at this time of life! He spent a great deal of his study time in reflecting over this very subject. He looked back at his little school, took up the pupils individually and was astonished to find so lop-sided a system as he had inadvertently drifted into.

But he had never thought of this while teaching, and no one had ever told him of it. The superintendent had only viewed his school superficially, and had not noted these irregularities, or if he did, thought they were no worse, perhaps, than most of the other schools of the county.

After the Institute, from which he went home

considerably puzzled as to how would be the best way to bring his school to some kind of system, he studied and read as much as he could.

He did not neglect his social opportunities, however, and being quite energetic for one so young, was the subject of remark at more than one dinner table or fire-side. Some of those who had sneered at his pretensions to teaching, who had asked jestingly, "What good can come of the carpenter's son?" began to see in him a model that their own children might follow with profit; if not a model of perfection, at least a much better example than many that they knew of.

He had a warm place in the hearts of the young people, being present at many a social gathering. His deportment being always manly and genteel, he was esteemed wherever he was best known.

In the bright month of October, he again journeyed down to District 6, to open school for his second term. How glad he was to get back! It seemed to him like getting home from a long journey.

He went to work at once to try to systematize

his school and made some progress, but still he fell short of the success he should have liked to attain at many points.

Men seldom act or think entirely alone. Things that were distressing him had been distressing many others. The lack of system in the rural schools had been noticed and lamented by many a teacher who had received pupils from other districts into his own, and noted the difference between those schools, as judged by the progress of the pupils, and his own.

One county superintendent in the great state of Illinois had brooded himself gray-headed over this very subject. Finally, to relieve himself and the schools of his county, he issued a "Manual and Guide," in which he outlined the work of the pupils by years, telling exactly how much of each branch pupils might be expected to master in a given year. He had often talked of this to his teachers and they heartily sympathized with him and agreed to try to work to his Manual the coming year.

How did Tom know all about this? Why, he was a very close reader of one of the most progressive school journals in the state, and the

matter had attracted so much attention that the editor gave his readers the whole plan, outlining certain years' work to make his article plain. He stated, moreover, that wonderful results were being attained, and that several of the neighboring counties contemplated adopting the same Manual, for, they argued, what is a blessing to the pupils of Macon County, will be a blessing to our own.

So Tom lost no time in sending for a copy of the Manual, which he studied carefully. He took it to the school-room, and referred to it often in the course of the year's work. When the superintendent visited his school that term, Tom called his attention to it, referring to some point that he had not been fully able to bring his school up to.

The superintendent took the book into his hand, turned it over critically, looked through it and said:

"I believe I have a copy of this manual in my office, if I have not destroyed it. I think the author sent me a copy, but I have never examined it very closely. I'll look it up when I go back to the office, and write you about the

point you refer to."

How like many a superintendent! A good thing came to the office but received a chilly reception. Not because the superintendent did not want to progress, but because he imagined he could not find the time to look over everything the enterprising publishers were sending out.

Tom worked away as well as he could, doing everything that he knew of to make his work better. When spring arrived, he had saved enough of his salary to enable him to attend a spring term at college. He went off joyously, resolving to make the best of the time, for he knew that his limited purse would not permit him to waste any time. Before leaving, however, he contracted to return to District 6 again in the beautiful month of October and begin another term of school,

This pleased him greatly, causing him to feel that his efforts to give his patrons a good school had been partially successful. He had worn off some of his timidity, too, and had asked the board to raise his salary to thirty-five dollars a month. This they had done with a little hesi-

tancy. So you see Tom could leave home in the best of spirits. Even if he spent every cent of his savings, he knew he had a school to come back to in the fall.

At the college he met a number of other teachers, who, like himself, had closed their short winter terms and taken advantage of their opportunity to refresh their minds in a wholesome review. Their acquaintance was of much benefit to Tom, and especially their recitations, for they gave him an opportunity to measure himself in comparison with other teachers. The work was different from what he had had in the public school. The lessons were much longer and considerably harder. Explanations were made to the whole class, and those who did not pay close attention to the work would not get much out of it. Tom was a good student himself, and, besides, had the good fortune to room with a young man who was known to be one of the best students in the college. This young man gave him much encouragement; was really of as much help to him as the college, itself, was. He showed him that diligent application is the price of success in the educational field.

Many a night did Tom pursue his studies to the midnight hour. He could begin to see what great effort, and what numberless sacrifices were necessary to succeed. The work of one of the literary societies made a most favorable impression on him. Taking it all through, this short period at college was of great benefit to the growing mind of our energetic young teacher.

One strong impression Tom received from the work in college, and one which went with him through life, was that he must work out the educational problems for himself. He might get all the help in the world but he would still be obliged to put his own brain to the rack to master the work. Thorough assimilation came only as a result of steady application. He had re-impressed upon him the truth of a statement made by his politician-teacher, before mentioned, that no one can study for you, but you must do the work for yourself.

At his age this made impressions that were bound to be of great use to him in the future and to the schools in which he worked. A good influence is as surely shed abroad as a bad one, though perhaps it does not attract as much im-

mediate attention. Years after, Tom had the satisfaction of knowing that the constant reference to this fact in his classes made such impressions on some of his pupils that they developed into very industrious young men and women.

Commencement day arrived and Tom was much impressed with the exercises attending it. The president's address was full of wholesome thought for every one. Tom did not let it all pass without getting something to take with him into the wide world. When he returned home he was more thoughtful and earnest than ever.

Although he had his school engaged, he made arrangements to attend college another year. His directors unwillingly let him off. This year was full of good things for him. He returned and was again appointed teacher of the school in District 6.

One regret he had was that he should not be permitted to return to college another year and continue his studies. This, however, he knew was impossible, for he had engaged to teach in District 6 again, and besides he did not have the money to defray another year's expenses.

But he thought these things need not keep him from studying at home. As the professors had told him and as he found true by observation, he would have to dig it out for himself anyway, and he may make the best of his circumstances, and go on with the studying he had been doing the past two winters, with the added enthusiasm his work at school had given him.

At the superintendent's examination that fall, he passed a successful examination for a first grade certificate, and was greatly pleased to receive it, but not so exalted as he had been to receive that first certificate a little more than three years before.

Owing to the fact that Tom had earned promotion from the ranks of the second grade teachers to the ranks of the first grade teachers, he was praised by his admirers, and they were many. His standing in the councils of the Teachers' Association was established and his appointment as member of the executive committee of that organization was a just recognition of his faithful work.

It was at one of the meetings of the association that he purchased a book of questions and

answers from a fellow teacher, who combined the agency business with his teaching to increase his scanty income. The agent-teacher had taught for a great many years, and in getting acquainted with Tom, asked him where he was teaching. Tom told him, and he said:

“Well, young man, let me give you a little piece of advice. While the little country school is a most enjoyable institution to work in, I should advise you not to spend your days in teaching from one district to another on the meager salary usually paid as I have done. I have taught near a score of years and am no better fixed financially than I was at the end of the first term. While my services should be worth more than those of a new teacher, I find that rural boards seldom take previous service into consideration, so that if I want a school, I must accept it at the price paid raw material or go elsewhere. So, now while you are young, take my advice, and work up in the profession.”

Tom thought over this often. He tried to reason out the causes for this teacher's failure to reach a living salary. He thought he could detect evidences of discouragement, and a lack

of the real spirit to rise. He tried to convince himself that the teacher was somewhat to blame for his own misfortune. But still the action of the board that first hired him came into his mind causing him to think that there is some ground for the view the teacher-agent had taken of the matter. He decided that it would do him no harm to try to work up in the profession.

Tom found later in life that the advice given him freely was worth more to him than the book he purchased.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW TOM FAILED TO GET A CERTAIN APPOINTMENT.

Tom was a human, and therefore more or less of a dreamer, one who often looked into the future and pictured things as he would desire they should exist.

During the winter months he often thought of the advice given him with the book he purchased, and pictured himself as principal of the village school in the town of his birth. The board of directors of the village school was composed of two business men in the strict sense of the term and one wealthy gentleman who, while he practiced law as a recreation, spent most of his time looking after the numerous farms that his frugal father had left to him at the time of his demise. This member of the board was also somewhat of a politician and widely known over the county and throughout the legislative district, having represented his district in the state legislature. Tom and his immediate friends had always been faithful adherents to the cause

of this director in his political canvasses. Nor had they any cause to regret it, for he was a man of considerable ability, and ably represented his constituents.

There was considerable friction in the village schools that particular winter. Enough at least to cause the board to decide to change principals for the ensuing year. This director thought that there was no reason why Tom should not have the place. He held a first grade certificate and had had splendid success in his little school. He had satisfied himself of the fact that Tom had been successful by interviewing one of the directors of District 6 who was also a tenant on one of this Director's farms.

One day this director hinted at the subject to Tom, who, while he had aspirations for the place some time in life, had no immediate notion of applying. But the matter being brought to his attention by one of the directors, he considered it worthy of his notice. So, after going over the situation with his friend on the school board, he decided to apply. His friend agreed to make a special plea to the board in his behalf. He visited the other directors, was received

kindly, but not encouraged in the least. One of the directors, a very shrewd business man and a warm personal friend of Tom, advised him to wait a few years before aspiring to so great a task, arguing that he was full young to assume the control of so large a school, finishing by saying that he really believed it would be for his own personal good to withdraw his application and continue his work in less arduous fields until he was more mature.

Tom decided that this was good advice, and was about to act upon it when he chanced to meet the other Director, who, on being told of Tom's inclination, would not hear to it, saying the matter could yet be fixed up. So Tom let matters take their own course, and the result was that he was not appointed, but spent another term in the cozy little school house in District 6. At the board meeting in which Tom's application was rejected, the members got into quite a tangle from which it seemed they were not going to extricate themselves easily. Each member had a favorite for the place, no one seeming willing to give up for the others. As a compromise, a young lady was hired as prin-

incipal who had never really applied for the place, having been an applicant for the next room, the one in which she had taught for several years, but to which she was not re-appointed because one of the directors had a cousin who wanted that place, and she got it.

Oh, yes, things have taken that turn in more districts than one, as you very well know, if you have ever given the matter any thought.

The young lady, who was so unexpectedly made Principal of the school, was quite well educated, would have given the best of satisfaction had she been sufficiently supported by the board, but each member being defeated in his design to land the position for his favorite, temporarily lost interest in the success of the school, saying, when any little matter was brought before them, "Well, I did not favor her appointment. I wanted So-and-So to get that place, but I got turned town. Now they will have a chance to see what they have done."

Each tried to lay the blame on the other two. Not a new thing, either, is it? Only one result of the lethargy on the part of the board could be expected. The pupils soon saw that the

teacher was practically unsupported, and their actions were not always as correct as they should have been.

There is a restless element in most schools that would just as soon not study as to study, while there is also an element that wishes to learn to be useful, but are easily overcome by their love for a good time, and trifle away many an hour in doing things that are of no benefit to the school. There is also, most always, an element, though usually a small one, who come to learn, who mean to learn, and who can not be kept from learning, even if the rest of the school is idling.

Matters drifted from bad to worse until every one knew that Miss Principal was a failure so far as that room was concerned, though she had been eminently successful in the next room the year before. A few persons correctly surmised that the board was largely to blame for this state of affairs, and some even hinted at the matter to one member of the board. It produced no immediate effect, however, and the term worried through with very little good for the school as a whole, though a few pupils, who

could not be held back by circumstances, made good progress.

The spring election in that district retired one of the directors, who had had more criticism for the manner in which the school had failed to thrive than he thought he deserved, and refused to serve the district further. Another sensible gentleman was elected on the board to fill his place, and applications were being received for the various positions. Tom had viewed the situation from afar, as it were, and mentally congratulated himself that he had not been appointed, though at the time he had felt his disappointment keenly. He had no thought now of trying to secure a position in that school, contenting himself with the quietness of the little rural school.

Soon after the election, the board met for organization, and the situation, present and prospective was reviewed. The newly elected member stated that in his opinion the most of their trouble came from a lack of harmony on the part of the members of the board, saying also that in the interest of the schools he could work with any member, even so far as to assist in

carrying out measures of which he did not approve, so long as they were the wish of the majority of the board. This reasoning soon gained him the confidence of the other members, who were equally anxious to escape another year of criticism. Before that meeting adjourned, it was resolved and put down in the minutes, that any action taken by a majority of the board is the action of the board and the responsibility for that action would be shared equally by every member of the board; and it was also resolved that the board should give the teachers their entire sympathy and do everything in their power to make the ensuing school-year successful, and thus atone in some measure for the failure of the last term.

One day the director who had so kindly advised Tom to withdraw his application the previous year, met Tom and told him of the action of the board, suggesting that he might receive an appointment as assistant principal if he made application for it. Tom did not know about that. He could not keep out of his mind the trouble that the school had had the year before. Before they parted, however, Tom agreed to in-

terview the other members of the board.

As a result of that interview he placed his application with the clerk of the board, and at the next meeting was awarded the position. The principal appointed was a young man full of ambition, a young man of exemplary habits and good education. A man who was firm and decisive in his work, who expected the strictest obedience on the part of the pupils. These were strong points and Tom was glad to be associated with a character of this kind in the educational field.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE ROMANCE AND A BRIGHT-EYED LITTLE
MAIDEN.

While Tom had attended the little village school under the care of the politician-teacher referred to in a previous chapter, there had also attended a bright-eyed little maiden of about his own years. She was intelligent and refined, a good student and a companionable school-mate. In moderate circumstances, she enjoyed the best social standing in the little village. Her gentle manner and sweet face won her friends everywhere. No one ever received an unkind word or criticism from her. Under these circumstances she was a general favorite. Never was there a gathering of the young folks without her presence, and she entered into the sports and pastimes of the young with a zest that made her a most welcome guest.

She did not look down upon the struggling Tom in his patched trousers, partly because it was against her code of ethics to look down upon any one, and partly because she recognized

in the humble youth a strong mental activity. They often met and chatted on just such subjects as school children are apt to talk about, and the friendship that existed was of that gentle kind that is scarcely noticed by the rest of the school. The fact is, that at that school there were a goodly number of the sensible class of young folks, who could recognize the rights of any one to courteous treatment despite the fact that some were better dressed than others.

While Tom did not obtrude his attentions upon the little maiden or upon any other in particular, he grew to be as popular with the girls of the school as any other. One of his close companions was the son of a wealthy family, who also attended the same school. These two boys played together, fished and hunted together and, in fact, spent much of their liesure in company with each other.

Many a time they escorted a group of the village girls to an old-fashioned spelling-match, or to a social gathering at the home of one of the girls. As Tom's friendship for the afore-mentioned maiden began to be noticed by the other young folks, they took particular delight in get-

ting them together as much as possible, and in a game of "pleased or displeased," would invariably assign them some innocent task to perform to the great merriment of the others. They deported themselves in such a manner as to bring expressions of approval from their fellows.

Often each was seen in company with some other companion for an evening's entertainment, lest they might get the charge of being too exclusive. While neither of them had ever said a word to make the other believe that a special feeling of regard was being cultivated, they both knew intuitively that they enjoyed themselves more in each other's company than either did in the company of some one else.

Do you not know, gentle reader, that there is a sort of mental communication that tells one of appreciation or the lack of it without any words being spoken? Yes, you know it, of course. So does every one else.

While Tom, during his teaching, was social with all the young ladies of his acquaintance, and the little maiden was likewise social with all the young gentlemen of the village, and

while each often indulged in the pleasure of the company of others, yet each knew instinctively that their very happiest hours were spent in company with each other.

Many a time they strolled to the wood-land near by, and picked the brightest flowers of the spring, engaging in that happy conversation that made the hours fly past with distressing rapidity. Or, perhaps, they attended services in the little church that the village folks in their worldliness almost neglected.

While their hearts beamed with happiness that knew no bounds, and with a mutual regard that was pure, yet neither had ever breathed a word to the other that should convey in language—in spoken language—what the language of the heart knew perfectly. This was because Tom was too timid, and the little maiden felt satisfied to share the companionship of the one she regarded most highly in the quiet manner they were enjoying.

Never did Tom win a fresh success but he received her praise, and congratulations. She watched his career earnestly from the time he opened his little school in District 6, and was

proud of every item of his success, So in sympathy was she with him that she gave him every encouragement that would make him more useful. She heartily commended his course in attending college, even though it should deprive her of the occasional evening they were accustomed to spend together.

Tom took a lively interest in her fancy work and such other things as she did in the way of useful employment, and the days passed by happily, oh, so happily. You know all about it? Yes, but still you love to read it over, do you not? The world loves a lover and his love. Their little world loved them and showed them every courtesy. Happy youth! In the spring-time of life, when the pure blood courses rapidly in the veins and the heart beats warmly, giving cheer to all within reach of its rays of influence; when the thoughts and hopes are brightest! You've enjoyed them? Then thank God that you have, and that their pleasant remembrance shall cheer you along the path of life and form a pleasant spot to which the mind's eye may return with joy to see something pure and true, after you have made a wider acquaintance

with the ways of the world and found to your sorrow that there is a great deal of gloss and glitter beneath which there is a world of corruption, deceit and treachery. If you have found these things to be true, too, you all the more appreciate the pure and noble friendship of a charming little maiden who did everything she could for your happiness, and thought and expressed pure, noble thoughts, hoping in real earnest for your welfare.

There is only one feeling that will always wish for you the best in life. There are many others that will appear to your face to be interested in your welfare, while behind your back they are trying to undermine your superstructure and let you fall ignominiously. Some of these latter feelings are envy, jealousy, ambition to reach something with you in the way—oh, you say we need not enumerate them; you know them, Well, then, we will desist and extend to you our sympathy.

The feeling the little maiden had for Tom was not one of these latter. You may guess what it was (or rather is, to be more grammatical)—well, well, you've guessed it already. Either

you are very good at guessing, or we have made it plainer than we intended to.

This intimate acquaintance with one so fair, so true and so worthy, did not prevent Tom from studying and reading. On the contrary, it rather stimulated him in his desire to do something and to be something in this world for himself—and perhaps another, but he thought this in a whisper; for, as we have told you several times, he was somewhat timid.

However, despite his timidity, he had mustered the courage necessary to face that awful superintendent and collect himself sufficiently to receive a certificate. Later, he had returned from an examination which resulted in his receiving a certificate of the first grade, and now he thought he should work up the courage necessary to unburden his heart to the little maiden and ask her to share his joy and sorrow during their natural lives. But no, the words would not come! Been there? It does seem as if I am telling you a great deal that you already know. Well, I hope you are happy in the knowledge.

But Tom just couldn't make his resolution

stick, and thus we must leave them in this chapter, with hearts in true sympathy and with an understanding of each other's wishes, and yet with the words unspoken, the words that mean so much to all of us at times.

CHAPTER VI.

IN A GRADED SCHOOL.

As stated in a former chapter, Tom was successful in securing a position in the public schools of the little village of his birth. He appreciated the honor included in the appointment, and was resolved to give the patrons and directors no cause for regret at having placed so much confidence in him. His salary, too, was increased, a fact which pleased him much, and besides, the term was longer. He had never taught more than five months each term in the country, while the term in the little village extended over nine months.

He saw that his salary would be sufficient to allow him to devote the entire vacation to study, instead of having to hustle the summer through to keep from going "broke" before the first month's salary should become due in the fall.

We wonder how many teachers who teach short terms at low salaries manage to save enough to tide them over the long summer

months, without having to devote their time to some other work.

On the first Monday in September, Tom was at his desk ready for business. He felt somewhat lost when the school was called, for he had a large room-ful of pupils. The number was so much greater than he had been accustomed to that he did not know what to do first. However, getting his wits together, he gave them a short introductory talk, after which he called out the most advanced Arithmetic class in the room, proceeding to catechise them. He explained to them that it would be necessary to find out what they knew so that he should be able to begin his work properly. A lot of close questions, well selected, and dealing with the more fundamental operations soon convinced him that he should have to devote some time to a wholesome review, and convinced them, too, that they were far short of what they should be in parts of the work which they supposed they had finished. Many of them looked shame-faced at not being able to answer questions that they knew they should be able to handle.

Tom did not realize at the time what a good

thing it was for him that he did his first questioning so shrewdly. He had captured that class for all time, had shown them where they were deficient, had gained their confidence by standing up before them without a text-book to assist him, and pouring in the questions with a rapidity that fairly dazzled them. At the first recess, some of the larger boys of the room gathered in little knots to discuss the new teacher, as boys will do.

“Well,” said one of the boys, “he showed me that I do not know much about Arithmetic, and he seemed perfectly at home in that review. I should like to know the subject as thoroughly as he does.”

“So would I,” said another, “and I don’t see any reason why we should not if we do our part.”

Most of the boys agreed to this as they passed on to the school-ground for a little recreation and to continue the discussion of the new teacher. There they met a number of upper-class boys who were discussing the new principal in a similar manner. They agreed that there would be no nonsense about the school this year, for

they were going to have to work to keep up with their classes. One or two of the boys who came to school just because they were compelled to, or because going to school is easier than sawing wood, seemed rather discouraged at the prospect of really having to do some work in school, and consoled themselves with the thought that this state of affairs would not last long. These new teachers would "get off the fence" as they expressed it, as soon as they had "showed off" a little. But their predictions failed. When the school was called in again another siege of questioning was begun in other branches. Lessons were outlined, and work assigned for the morrow. A strong hint was dropped that they would be expected to do the work, and be prepared at the time the class was called.

And so it happened that Tom established himself in the new school much more successfully than he had expected to do, but it soon dawned upon him that now, that he had set so smart a pace, he should be compelled to keep it up, or he would lose some of the prestige he had gained that first day. He worked diligently at home, carefully going over each lesson to guard a-

gainst being caught on something on which he might not be prepared for the moment.

Of course the new teachers were talked about at the homes of the pupils in the evening. Persons who some years ago had rather scoffed at the idea of Tom Wilkins teaching school now began to say, "I told you so," and expressed themselves as otherwise satisfied or delighted at the thought that the winter was not to be wasted as the former one had been. The school board was particularly delighted, for they felt that hiring a teacher is a great deal like buying lottery tickets; you never know before hand whether you have a winning number or a blank. The winter previous they had rendered the school almost blank by being at loggerheads themselves. Now they were happy. So was the little bright-eyed maiden aforementioned, for she had watched anxiously for the opening of the fall term of school, and listened eagerly for the first echoes from the school-room. And greatly pleased she was to overhear some little girls at noon saying that the new teacher was just fine.

Tom's acquaintance with the Manual and

Guide stood him in good stead, for the new principal had prepared an outline of the work to be done in each grade, and had furnished copies of it to the teachers. This was something decidedly new and novel for this school, which had heretofore stumbled along as best it could, without any system at all. Each teacher took his classes over so much ground as he saw fit to, or as they were able to manage. And it had often happened that particularly bright pupils had been coached and promoted as the individual teacher saw fit, or saw that such a course would work to his personal temporary advantage. There were four rooms in the building, but instead of having a graded school it was more like four separate schools, and pupils were often promoted because of size or because of the crowded condition of the lower rooms.

Now all this had been changed and pupils were to be promoted by the principal only after having completed the specified work. This seemed to Tom much better, for it put system into the work. Promotions were to be made on merit and not on fine clothes or curly locks. (How apt teachers are to think that pretty, at-

tractive, neatly dressed children are brighter than their more unfortunate neighbors—especially some teachers! From what you have seen of Tom, do you think he was of that class?)

The manner of coming into and going out of the school house had also been changed. Instead of a grand rush for the doors at the ringing of the bell calling in the pupils, they were formed in lines at appropriate places, and at a given signal marched into their rooms. Likewise on leaving the room for the intermissions, they were required to do so in an orderly and systematic manner. This was so entirely different from any thing that the community ever saw before that some of the citizens wondered if the new teachers were not trying to make soldiers of the pupils, and that too in a time of the most profound peace.

The work of the school went on gloriously that winter. The pupils soon adjusted themselves to the new order of things, and the progress made by the school was greater than had ever before been achieved in a single year. True there were a few little episodes that required the new teachers to show that they meant just what

they said about the matter of discipline, but they did not seriously disturb the usual quiet of the school. Tom noticed with pleasure that the new principal did not believe in the promiscuous use of the rod in governing the rougher element of the school. Every one was given to understand that the price paid for the privilege of attending that school was the strictest kind of obedience, and things went on reasonably smoothly. This contrasted radically with the tactics of the teacher-politician mentioned in a former chapter, and Tom was pleased with the change.

Somewhere in his reading Tom had imbibed the idea that in order to become a good commander, one must learn to obey. So while he did not always agree with the principal upon the expediency of doing certain work a certain way, still he did not oppose it or refuse to do as he was bid, for, he argued with himself, if he were principal he should want his plans fairly tried even if those whose duty it was to try them, did not at all agree with them. This lesson absorbed so early in life did him a great deal of good later.

This term of teaching was almost as good for Tom as a corresponding time spent in college would have been. Here, while he was constantly refreshing his mind, he was also gaining very useful points in pedagogy from his own work and from observation of the work of other teachers. You know that one may be told just how to teach under all circumstances, and yet not be a successful teacher until he has had practical experience. It is just like shoeing a horse. You may read all the works extant upon the art of horse-shoeing, but you will never make a horse-shoer until you have really shod a horse. And, in all probability, even though you may make an average of 100, plus, in a written examination, you will fail to make a complete success of it the first time you undertake to do the work.

CHAPTER VII.

A LITTLE FRICTION IN THE UPPER ROOM.

The work of the year went on smoothly, as noted, and when spring came Tom felt that he had rendered good services for the amount he had received, and that he had been greatly benefited by his contact with his fellow teachers. He realized now more than ever the utter loneliness of the rural teacher, with no one to talk to on school subjects, no one to advise him except the superintendent on his annual visit of a few hours. Here he met the other teachers frequently and many subjects of interest to all were discussed in such a manner that all received a great deal of good out of them.

When it came time to appoint teachers again, the board was in such a high state of satisfaction at not having been tormented by dissatisfied patrons, and so thoroughly pleased with the progress the school had made that the same corps of teachers was appointed for the next year.

Tom spent his vacation in recreation and study, attended the Institute, and noted with interest that the Manual and Guide had been taken up by the State Teachers' Association and revised and enlarged. He secured a copy of the revision and went over it carefully, noting the changes as compared with his former Manual. Many profitable points were picked up from this and from his reading of educational literature. He had begun to think that he could not be nearly so successful as he had been without the helpful influence of his favorite school journal. What a mental condition that is to get into! To think that one could not teach school without reading "some old school journal," as some express it! Ridiculous, isn't it? Some do get along without it. But do they ever really reach that higher plain of intellectual delight that Tom did?

There is very little to record concerning the next winter's work, further than to say that the school went on smoothly in the main and made more progress than it did the year before, because the teachers and pupils were better acquainted with each other. The regulations had

become more easily observed.

But one day one of the upper class boys, probably dreaming that he was in a school of the old kind, when asked to perform some task, leaned back lazily and remarked that he "did not have to." The entire school was surprised at his presumption. So was the principal. Being a large man physically, and taken so by surprise, wholly unaccustomed to being disobeyed, and realizing the effect upon the school if that young man were not promptly dealt with, he made a sudden bound at him, and in less time than it takes to tell it, had the culprit by the nape of the neck and landed him out of the door with instructions to leave the premises forthwith. The whole school was momentarily excited, but the principal called the next pupil and the work soon went on with its accustomed quietness. Probably the least excited person in the room was the principal. His quiet manner soon caused the pupils to resume their usual deportment, and not a word was said of the affair.

After school had closed for the evening, the principal went to the members of the board and told them what he had done, and remarked that

if he had his way about it that boy should not be permitted to return to school until he was ready to stand up before the whole school and apologize for the insult he had offered to both teacher and fellow pupils.

“Well,” said the president of the board, “you’ll just have your way about it. We don’t want any anarchy cropping out in the school, and we are not going to allow any pupil to act so discourteously and remain in school without making the matter right. We had a splendid school last year, and we intend to have this year, if the entire support of the board will be of any assistance to the teachers.”

Do you think that board did right or not? Would it have been better for them to have established a court of inquiry, so to speak, and call in the boy in question and ask him to give his version of the affair; to take into consideration his social standing; who his “pa” was, and sundry other minor items, such as whether he might not have said what he did in a joke? Was it not wrong to cast a boy away from the good influences of the school, probably to grow up in wickedness?

Well, you have your opinion, and we have ours; but we make it a rule, as that board did, never to go back on the teacher in a critical moment.

That boy's "pa" settled the matter when he heard about it. He asked the board what had been decided upon. He called upon the principal at his home. At first the principal felt a little uneasy not knowing what turn affairs might take. Have you ever been waited upon by a stern parent? Oh, you have, have you? Well this parent entered the teacher's door quietly, respectfully took the proferred hand and the convenient chair. He began quietly by saying:

"I just dropped in to speak to you about that boy of mine. He has acted rudely to-day, and I want you to deal with him just as your judgment says the case requires, and count upon me to stand right by you. I shall send him back in the morning, and I think you will have no more trouble with him." Then he changed the subject, never referring to the episode again. Did that principal feel relieved? Well, you said you had been there.

The boy returned to school the next morning,

fell right into line with the regulations, made an honest apology, and the school went on as if nothing had happened. Tom knew all these circumstances thoroughly, and decided that that way was much more effective than a "decent switching" would have been, and it made a lasting impression upon him. It is only on account of the way it affected the life and career of Tom that this incident is related here. Tom saw at a glance that the union of teacher, school board and parent on the same side made an impregnable wall against which the unruly might butt his brains to his sorrow.

But it is suggested that it requires a sensible parent to look at such a case as this one did. Agreed. It takes a sensible school board, too, and likewise a sensible teacher. In fact, it takes sensible people to make things go as they should any where in life. What would any government amount to without sensible people to make the laws and to administer them?

The term passed on to a finish and another successful school year closed. The principal, who had given such invaluable service to the school, had finished his course at law, and

passed a successful examination for admission to the practice of his chosen profession. He was not an applicant for reappointment, but meant to enter his chosen profession and try to work upward in it. He had a cousin who had taught a number of years, and who had some of the most splendid recommendations any board ever read. He induced this cousin to make application for the position. He also talked to the board about the matter.

It had been thought by some that Tom should now follow to the principalship, and Tom had been inclined to think so too. But he went to his old director friend who was still on the board and had a talk with him. His friend advised him to stay right where he was, saying that he should have an increase in salary. His reasons for advising him thus were that they needed a strong teacher in that room as well as in the higher one, and then besides it would be hard for one so young as he to follow one who had been so eminently successful as had the retiring principal. So Tom decided not to apply, and the cousin secured the appointment.

The new principal was a man passed middle

age who had "hacked about from pillar to post" for twenty years, never teaching in the same school more than two terms in succession. He was small of stature, light in weight and extremely nervous and irritable. You can imagine what a change was destined to come over that school. Well, we will tell you all about it in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

PROFESSOR SMALL.

Two years of the most successful school the little village had ever enjoyed had set a standard below which a new-comer must not fall without being in danger of severe criticism. Nothing short of a first class all-around school man could have followed the principal who had stepped from the profession of teaching to the practice of law, and have made a success of it. This nervous and fretful cousin did not in any way fill the requirements. He was well educated, and had had a great deal of experience but he lacked that will power and determination to make results. Old as he was he had a disgusting desire to "show off" before his classes, and would often make punning remarks at which he himself would laugh most heartily. The pupils laughed too at first, but these remarks soon became old and dry. You know there is nothing that gets drier than the lowest form of wit. Its use robs one of that very necessary quality, dig-

nity.

Instead of continuing the admirable system that had been established in the school, this principal let everything drift back to the former condition of careless, slipshod work that had made the school a failure before, and that can be counted upon to make any school a failure.

He had no use for a course of study, did not believe in the present course, thought that his room was about all there was of the school anyway, and knew he could teach with the greatest of success without having any one else to tell him what to teach and when to teach it.

His twenty years of experience in a number of different schools had made him invincible. He also objected to the loss of the time necessary to form the pupils in line to march in at the call of the bell. The board had ordered this practice continued. But he often lectured his school on the loss that was thus entailed, and instead of showing that he and the board were in perfect harmony, he stated to them that if the board had not so ordered he would have the boys come up the stairs two steps at a time and save that amount of time for valuable study. In

fact he lectured so long on that unimportant topic that one of the pupils said he wasted at least fifteen minutes telling them that they should not waste one. Example does say a great deal. Not all pupils are dullards. They soon saw that there was a breach between the principal and the school-board, and it had the usual effect. It will always have that effect.

Light of weight and small of stature, he would often boast before his school that if he took the notion he could punish the biggest boy in the room, and if occasion required, he would certainly do so. While the large boys were for the most part respectful and full of a desire to learn, there were a few that would just like to see this light-weight tackle one of the larger boys, just for fun. For there were boys there who could have bound him hand and foot. The boastful spirit not followed by acts to justify the boasting (if boasting can ever be justified) lost to this principal a great deal of the influence which he should have had, and which he certainly would have had, had he deported himself properly.

Things went from bad to worse, and criticisms

began to come in to the board, and their lives began to be burdensome again. They held a meeting to talk over the difficulties. One member of the board concluded that perhaps they were not supporting the teachers as they should, remembering the troubles they had experienced when the board members were at loggerheads. So they decided to call the principal into consultation the next evening. The clerk sent him notice to appear at the specified time to talk over the condition of educational affairs. He had been before many a board, had often been called down, and had come to recognize the average school board as the teacher's greatest enemy. He had argued with many a board and showed them that they knew nothing at all about school, while he, himself, knew a great many things, in fact, about all there was to be known.

Instead of keeping his own counsel and quietly obeying the request of the board for a conference, he announced in open school that the board had ordered him to attend a meeting to look into the affairs of the school, intimating that if that board thought they could give him any "pointers" on teaching they were very

much mistaken. He went before the board with a feeling of humiliation which he might have avoided if he had not advertised the fact that he had been called into the conference by the board.

You see he had always taught in communities where a call before the board meant a calling down, and his desire to vindicate himself in advance had caused him to make the matter public.

At the meeting he was cordially received and each member seemed anxious to make the conference profitable for all concerned. He was asked concerning things, and immediately flew into a passion at what he considered undo interference in affairs that were entirely his business, and gave the board his set speech on such occasions, intimating that they knew nothing about teaching, not one of them had ever held even a second-grade certificate, while he held a first-grade and had taught a score of years. His talk ran on in an abusive strain with a strong current of braggadocio in it until one member of the board, becoming utterly disgusted, could not refrain from remarking:

“Well, I don’t care how many years you may

have taught before, you are not teaching any thing worth while this year. From more points of view than one your school is a flat failure. I see now why you have never stayed very long at any one place. And I assure you right now that if I have my way about it you will not disgrace this school another year. Here we have called you into conference to try to help you all we can with our advice and support and you spurn our offers of assistance, and must get through the best you can."

Rumor says that the member of the board lost his temper temporarily and injected into the conversation a few adjectives and expletives that a polite writer like myself would not put down on paper. The principal replied:

"Well, you do just what you please for the next term, but I shall run the school for the remainder of this year as I know it should be run. I am sorry that you know nothing about school, but I can not help that, I shall have to do the best I can. Of course, I understand that you want Tom Wilkins to get my place and you mean to persecute me all you can to pave the way for him. Well, just take him and see

what kind of a school you will have any way. Still, it will be as good as you deserve."

With this thrust he lapsed into silence and lost all interest in the conference, which came to an end shortly and Mr. Principal went his way with a feeling of hatred for everybody in general and for that school board and Tom Wilkins in particular.

Naturally, Professor Small, (for that was his name), acquired a growing hatred for Tom, who, he thought, was ambitious to succeed him, and whose ambitions were the cause of his apparent persecution. He lost no opportunity to remind his pupils, and especially those who contemplated teaching that there were several things going on in the next room that should not be done by a good teacher. Sometimes in his bitterness at his failure to make his pupils do just as he wished them to, he would remark, "Well, just wait till Tom Wilkins gets to be principal and then you will have a school," always with a sneer. It happened that Tom had many friends in that room already, for one class had been under his care the first year he had taught in the building. These pupils did not appreciate

the remarks of Professor Small, his hatred for the whole school and for Tom being too great to be disguised.

Tom knew nothing of the unkind remarks that Professor Small had been making for several weeks. One day one of the upper class boys told him about it. He was of course very much chagrined. He could not understand the Professor's motive unless it was to injure him. He talked to his school director friend about it saying that he would very much regret it if he had done or said anything to gain the Professor's ill will. The director told him to pay no attention to the matter at all, treat the Professor as well as he could, and everything would come out all right in the end.

Tom knew this was good advice, and knew, too, that this director had never given him any other kind. So he acted upon the advice and refused to show the least resentment toward the Professor, who was allowing all sorts of remarks to pass his lips, and allowing the school to drift into uselessness as rapidly as possible.

As soon as spring weather opened up the larger pupils began to drop out of school, so

many leaving that the Professor had scarcely a half-dozen left to preach to.

The term closed gloomily enough, and at the meeting of the board for the appointment of teachers Tom's application was read and he was appointed principal of the public schools in the village of his birth. He was almost beyond himself with delight, and yet he knew there was plenty of hard work ahead of him. His youthful dreams were being realized more rapidly than he expected they would be.

Do you not think that Tom's experience with Professor Small was of great benefit to him?

CHAPTER IX.

APPOINTMENT AS PRINCIPAL. A VISIT.

Having secured the appointment as principal of the village schools, Tom spent a few weeks in carefully going over the outline for the next year's work, attended the institute as he had done every summer, and then concluded that the best recreation that he could take would be a visit to some relatives who lived at a distance from his home.

He packed up his books, closed up his writing case, selected what clothing he wished to take with him, and on a bright morning in the merry month of June was at the railway station waiting for the train to carry him to new scenes and to new friends, who would be very warm friends to him as they knew him better. After changing cars twice and waiting patiently the intervals, he arrived at his destination and was met at the depot by a cousin who had been apprised of his coming, and who had come to welcome him and transfer him to the beautiful country home that

his uncle had built by hard toil and carefulness in a rough and rather mountainous portion of the country.

This country home was a large and roomy, old fashioned residence, surrounded by fertile fields that had been tended carefully for a quarter of a century. The barns were full of well-bred horses, the pastures full of cattle of the profitable variety, the poultry yard stocked with the choicest of fowls, and the orchards laden with an abundant crop of young fruit.

Tom took in the situation fully one afternoon as he lay out in the improvised hammock under one of the great trees that shaded the neatly-kept front yard. He had always been accustomed to life in the village, and the change was really inspiring to him. Uncle Jim Wilkins was a rough spoken, rather coarse mannered man, but a man with a pure heart nevertheless, and appreciated the progress that his brother's son had made in the world. And all the more so, for he knew that the boy had received very little financial encouragement from home.

He, himself, had made a good bit of money on the farm during the period immediately fol-

lowing the war when the price of wheat made it worth while to raise that cereal extensively, and then he had been watchful of the changes that come over the agricultural world, and had drifted into the raising of stock and fruit when wheat began to be an unprofitable production. Aunt Mandy had always been a careful housewife, saving everything she could, marketing her poultry and eggs at such times as she could receive the highest prices for them.

Their home was plainly though comfortably furnished and beamed with old-fashioned hospitality. Tom's visit was a red-letter occasion at Uncle Jim's. The best in the larder was found upon the dinner table, the freshest eggs were served for breakfast, while milk and butter fresh from the spring-house were served in abundant quantities. The first evening after Tom's arrival the family sat up and talked until long after their usual hour for retiring. Tom had to tell a great deal of his experience as a teacher. This pleased Uncle Jim and Aunt Mandy very much for they had often wished that their eldest son might turn his attention toward an educational career, and even hoped

that some day he might teach the school in the district in which he lived.

Sam, this eldest son, had always demurred to the proposition, saying that he wasn't cut out for a school teacher; that he was meant for a farmer, and would never be fit for anything else. These sentiments grieved Uncle Jim very much, for while he had not received much education himself, still he desired that his children should have the best in the market if they would only take it. He had the money necessary to make the proposition good, too.

"But," he often remarked, that's the way it goes. "Boys, like Tom Wilkins, that has to work it all out for theirselves, has got more inclernation than them that hes the money to back 'em."

I am not sure but that Uncle Jim is about right about it. Tom thought so, too. But he also thought that one of the great requisites to securing an education is a real desire to have it, and confidence enough to believe that one can accomplish what many another has done. So he told Uncle Jim that, in his opinion, if he could get Sam to desire an education very earnestly, he should have paved the way to that end.

Uncle Jim asked Tom to try to bring the matter to Sam's attention in such a way that he would gain confidence in himself, and Tom promised to do so.

Let us say right here that Tom did as he had promised to. He went out to the field with Sam and showed him that his education did not unfit him for the work of a farmer; told him how he had struggled against adverse circumstances, and by pursuing a carefully laid out course of study, had succeeded thus far.

Let us also add that Sam did get interested and made considerable progress the next year, and did eventually teach the school in his home district.

Tom's stay at Uncle Jim's was one of the happiest few weeks he had ever spent. Two sons and one daughter were the children of the family. Sam was nineteen years old, Charley, fifteen, and Alice, the pride of her parents and the neighborhood, was seventeen. Tom took a great interest in his cousin, who often sat at the little parlor organ and whiled away a pleasant hour with most pleasing music. Her singing was particularly sweet and charming.

It seemed to Tom that the time just flew by, and he was beginning to think of returning home, when one evening a large number of the neighboring country people gathered for a social evening. Tom had met most of the young folks in the community and already had many friends among them. They kept coming and coming till there was an unusually large number present. Among the very last of the arrivals was a carriage of young folks from over the hill several miles away. They had come on invitation of Uncle Jim, whom they all knew and all loved and respected, for he was one of those good-natured old souls that will have friends in any community. Tom and Alice ran out to meet them, and imagine Tom's surprise to find among the number his little bright-eyed maiden from home. How did she get here! Yes, and how did he get here? That was her query. Glad to see her, well I guess. It was because of his eagerness to spend an evening with her, as much as any thing else that he had thought of going home so soon. She had also gone to visit friends and that is how she came to be here.

In love for the old man and his good old wife,

Tom took his little maiden around to them and introduced her as his most intimate female acquaintance, and he blushed at his boldness here when he had persisted in being such a coward at home.

The old folks received her most kindly, and made her most welcome. Uncle Jim, in his jolly way, said :

“Well, now Miss, if that be true, you just came upon the scene in time, for Tom has made so many friends here in these few weeks that I was getting afeard that some of these likely gals might capture him, and never let him go back,” and he chuckled and rubbed his hands together and the laugh passed all around.

A most enjoyable evening was passed. Innocent games were indulged in. Music filled part of the program, and Tom was persuaded to deliver one of his favorite declamations, which called for another. Uncle Jim was as happy as he had been for many a day. These larger children played “pleased or displeased” just as children had done years before, and they took just as much delight in putting some innocent task upon Tom and his little friend as the school

children had done some half-dozen years before, and it made their thoughts run back to a period of great pleasure.

Was it this being reminded of the old days, or was it the goodness of Uncle Jim and Aunt Mandy, or what was it that made Tom more brave than usual? Well, we don't know. But we do know that just before the party dispersed Tom had strolled over to the old well with his little maiden, and there in the moonlight, within the sound of many happy voices, had asked her to be his wife, and she blushing to the temples, and more confused than she had ever been before, had said the word that made him happier even than when he received his first certificate. And you know how happy that was.

After all the guests had departed, Uncle Jim said, "Tom, that's a likely gal, that friend o' your'n. And say, if this old man hain't mighty bad fooled, she'll be more'n a friend to you some day. An' when that day comes, I want you to come out an' spend a week with your old Uncle an' git better acquainted."

Tom tried to deny the charge, but got so confused that he colored up sufficiently to cause the

good old man to say to himself, "I hain't fooled this time, sure. Well, I guess not. I've seen young folks before. Bin one myself, come to think about it; and Mandy was another."

Tom returned home in a few days, and went right to work getting everything ready for the opening of school. He felt much refreshed by his trip to his uncle's, and highly gratified at the turn everything had taken, and especially pleased with his unexpected courage, and the result of it.

Miss Maggie Hughes (that was the name of the little maiden who had been so much comfort and encouragement to Tom, and who had so recently promised to be so much more comfort to him) returned from her visit soon, and Tom had the pleasure of an occasional evening with her. They were both extremely happy, and we shall leave them so in the closing paragraph of this chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE "GOOD ORDER LEAGUE," AN INTERESTING
EVENT.

In the little village there were some young men who appreciated the advantages that an education gives a young man in the struggles of after years. They were anxious to make their marks in this world, as every one should be. While they were wild in some respects and apt to do things that should not be done, yet they were only like many other young men who made good, useful citizens later in life. Human life is a study. There is a period in it when, it seems, wild oats must be sown. These young men were sowing theirs, not dissipatingly, but still they were sowing them. They organized dancing clubs, boating clubs, base ball clubs, and indulged in many other amusements.

They had observed carefully, and knew full well that the cause of the failure of the last winter's school was the lack of sense on the part of the principal—the lack of horse sense, as they expressed it. One evening as the boys

were talking in a group, as boys will, they struck the subject of school, as boys will.

“Well” said Charlie Smith, a boy of about sixteen, who aspired to be a lawyer some day, and win fame debating at the bar of justice, “I almost lost the entire school term last year. Prof. Small was such a nervous, fidgety man that I found it very hard to study as I should have done, and he talked so much, and so much nonsense, that before I knew where I was drifting, I had lost interest in the work.”

“So did I,” said John Reed, who was about the same age, and who desired to be a merchant some day. “But I think things will go better next year with Tom Wilkins at the helm. Most all the pupils like Tom, and for my part, I only wish I could learn to help myself as much as he helps himself. He seldom calls upon any one for assistance in his studies, and yet he has advanced to the rank of a first-grade teacher, while many others who appeared to have better opportunities than Tom had are still teaching little country schools on second-grade certificates.

“I am sure we shall all like Tom,” said Will Roberts, “for while it is great fun for a while

to go to school to a teacher like Prof. Small, yet in the long run it does us no good, and I am getting to the age now that I can not expect to go to school for many more years, and I am sure if we do our part, Tom Wilkins will do us a great deal of good the next term. He is just, reasonable and very anxious to do what is right."

"Boys, do you know what I think?" said Charley Smith. "I think we ought to band ourselves to-gether in a band for the purpose of supporting Tom Wilkins next term for our own good. He has always been a friend to the boys, always has a kind word for any of us, would do anything in his power to help us, and, for my part, I feel like fighting for him, if necessary."

"Agreed," chimed in several others, and so it was that the "Good Order League" was formed with Charley Smith as its president. The object of the league was to assist the new principal in every way to make a success of the school. Every member—and the membership soon increased to fifteen of the largest and strongest boys in the school—was pledged to the strictest

obedience in all things that Tom might wish to be done. And they furthermore pledged to "lick" the first boy who showed a desire to bully-rag the school or the teacher in any way.

They recognized that while Tom was rather small of stature, he was a giant in intellect, and they hoped to be able to lend him of their muscle, if it should be needed, in return for the services he would render them in their school work.

While these proceedings were kept quiet, everyone was given to understand that all the larger and better pupils were highly pleased with Tom's appointment. This league was undoubtedly of great help to Tom, but he never learned of its existence until a number of years afterward when one of the members of the league had been appointed superintendent of city schools in one of the flourishing cities of the southern part of the state. He had returned to his old home for a visit, and soon hunted Tom Wilkins up to tell him how much good his teaching had done him; how his example had inspired him; how deep an impression he had made by his lectures in which he reminded his pupils that their fate lay in their own hands,

and that they should have to work out their own destiny.

Tom thanked him for the kind remembrances and also for his good deportment which had made it possible to make these impressions. And right here was the opportunity for him to tell Tom about the "Good Order League," and how it was planned and how it worked. Good-natured, big-hearted Tom heard the recital to the end, and wiping away a big tear, said in a choked voice, "God bless you for all this kindness! And may you be as successful as you have desired me to be! I shall ever remember you gratefully."

But there! We have been going into the future again, and are in danger of telling the story before we get to it. Let us return to the text. Tom was happy the summer through, for reasons that you can readily understand. You see the school board had promoted him to the position of principal of the school, and Miss Hughes, the little maiden with whom you are somewhat acquainted, had promised to promote him to the position of a benedict! What more could a human desire?

Tom could not think of accepting the second promotion at once, for he was anxious to make an entire success of the first. So he went to work with his usual diligence and prepared an outline for the use of the schools the ensuing year. The work of each grade was carefully marked out, and a meeting of the teachers called. With them he went over the outline carefully, soliciting their support in carrying out his wishes. This he easily secured, for the teachers were all proud of Tom, and knew that under his guidance the schools would be successful. What a blessing it is to have the support of those with whom you work!

With these preparations and with the best wishes of the patrons of the school, the term started off auspiciously. There was no nonsense about Tom, and the pupils appreciated his strict attention to business, his clear-cut explanations to abstruse points, his skillful questioning, and his sensible talks. He found the matter of discipline much less troublesome than he had expected it would be.

You know there are teachers who can control a school by their presence, and whose keen eye

is more effectual than a birch rod. Tom's keenness of vision was attested to by one of the boys who, while he was not positively bad, was still inclined to perpetrate mischievous little tricks when he thought he was not being watched. He said after having been in school about two weeks, "Tom Wilkins must have eyes in the back of his head, for he has seen every little thing I have done this term."

When the Christmas holidays arrived and the pupils presented him a handsome token of their appreciation Tom was delighted, not on account of the value of the present, but because of the sentiment it conveyed. He re-doubled his efforts with the beginning of the new year, and everything went well with the school.

Tom often conferred with the school board, kept them apprised of the condition of the school, asked their advice on many points, and always showed himself ready to accept their suggestions. In the sessions of the County Teachers' Association he was always found a willing worker, and was beginning to be recognized as one of the valuable members of that organization. He seldom missed a meeting,

never shirked a duty, was often honored with a place upon the program, and frequently took part in the impromptu discussions that came up, and that were often the best part of the meeting.

When the end of the term arrived in the balmy month of June, Tom was well pleased with his work, was really surprised that he had had no trouble to speak of in the matter of discipline, was very thankful for the gentlemanly treatment the larger pupils had accorded him, and at the same time was somewhat puzzled to explain it all. You see we have the advantage of him, for he did not know of the existence of the "Good Order League," and we do.

An early meeting of the board resulted in his re-appointment. The summer institute had an especial interest for him, and he was found present every day of the session. After the institute closed Tom concluded to enjoy another visit with Uncle Jim and Aunt Mandy, whose kindness he could never forget, and who had written him several times during the winter insisting that he return the next summer and spend some of his vacation with them.

On a bright morning in the month of July—

the morning following an interesting evening at the home of the little maiden, in which Tom and Miss Maggie and a local Justice-of-the-Peace were the prominent characters, and a sumptuous supper a principal feature, and in which Tom was promoted to the rank of Benedict, with the sweet-faced little maiden as his bride—it was on the morning following this interesting event that Tom found himself at the railway station, with his little maiden, bound for Uncle Jim's to spend a few happy weeks, and prove to the good old soul that he was entirely correct in his conjectures of the previous summer.

Now the reader may find fault with this abrupt way of stating so important a part of the career of this young man. But remember this is not a love story, though there is plenty of that ingredient in it. Of course we might have gone over a number of the *tete-a-tetes* enjoyed by these young folks, might have described graphically their "bidding and cooing," their times of doubt and partial coldness, their indifference, and have capped the climax with a characteristic make-up of a slight difference of

opinion, their eagerness to crown the reconciliation with a hasty marriage to prevent another coldness, the sober thoughts engendered in the minds of both at the prospect of so materially changing their respective relations to the social world and to each other, might have dwelt a chapter or two upon the secret musings of the bride-to-be, and how she confidentially conveyed the happy news to her most intimate lady acquaintance, and then have occupied considerable of your valuable time in a description of the wedding preparations, the tasty dress, the nervousness of the critical moments, the solemnity of the ceremony, and the blessings showered upon the happy couple by those who wished them the best that this life affords.

But we have refrained from doing so, notwithstanding you would have enjoyed reading it, because this is not a love story, and because we have several other things to call to your attention that will be more to the purpose for which this story is written.

Their journey was a very pleasant one notwithstanding the warm weather. They arrived at their destination and were received with open

arms, given the best room at Uncle Jim's, loved and cherished and fed as Uncle Jim and Aunt Mandy knew young married folks ought to be for the two weeks of their stay. Alice was delighted with her new cousin and all were very happy.

CHAPTER XI.

TROUBLES OF HIS OWN.

We do not mean to tell you all about how this young couple returned from their outing, began housekeeping, established a cozy little home of their own, and numerous other little details that you may very easily imagine for yourself. But we will say that an important part of their furniture was that which occupied the corner of the room devoted to study, and that the sweet-faced little wife took great interest in Tom's studies, encouraging him in every way possible. They read good books together in the long winter evenings, and their home was soon known to be a useful one, and one in which the higher ideals of life were being cultivated.

In the election that occurred in the fall there was a change of County Superintendents. A young man had been nominated by the minority party to make the race against the superintendent who had been assisted to the place by the

politician teacher mentioned in an earlier chapter. No one expected this young man to defeat the superintendent who had held the position so long, and whose acquaintance was now very extensive. The young man went into the canvass, however, to win, interviewed the voters in every part of the county and when the election occurred, found himself elected by a small majority.

This change in the superintendence interested Tom. He had known the new incumbent for several years, having met him at the meetings of the association. While they did not agree politically, Tom extended to him his hearty support in every movement calculated to elevate the standard of the public school. So, while the new superintendent and Tom entertained different opinions on the political questions of the day, they agreed on many things concerning the work of the schools, and Tom always found a hearty welcome in the superintendent's office. In his visits there he learned a great deal about the work of a county superintendent.

One day one of Tom's personal and political friends suggested to him that he might some

day reach that office himself, if he were careful, and kept up his present record in the school work. He argued that this young man had only been elected by one of those strange political accidents that sometimes occur, and that the dominant party of the county would surely redeem the office at the next election.

Tom received the suggestion with thanks and said he would think over it, but mentally he said to himself that he would do the work in hand well, arguing that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush, and it would be nearly four years before the next election would occur.

With these thoughts he dismissed the matter from his mind and bent his energies toward making a success of the school. Soon after the opening of the term he discovered that he would in all probability not have as smooth sailing as he had the year before. There were several reasons for this. One was that the greater part of the larger pupils had severed their connection with the school, some to go to college, some to work for the necessities of life, some because others had quit, and for various reasons the upper class was thinned out. Of course, the

absent ones included the greater part of the "Good Order League."

Besides, there were a few young men, about Tom's own age, who had had as good opportunities as Tom to get an education, but who had preferred to waste their time in hunting, fishing, loafing, and various other ways rather than to buckle down to work to improve their minds. Several of these young men were intensely jealous of the success Tom was achieving, and tried in every way to throw obstacles in his path.

They had tried the same the year before, but were rebuffed, at every attempt, by the league. This year they went to work on some of the more mischievous pupils of the school, and put them up to various annoyances they might perpetrate upon the principal and have a "bushel of fun." There are always boys who prefer fun to work, and it did not take long for two of the boys to acquire a spirit of defiance in the school room, which grew as time went on and as these boys were coached by the young mentioned during the evenings when they all met to have a "time."

Tom soon saw how things were drifting and

began an honest search of his own heart to find if he were to blame for the existing state of affairs, re-doubled his energies to make his school what it should be, and went home often with a sad heart at what he began to think was to be the down-fall of his career as principal of the school.

One day he confided in his director friend, told him of his fears and expressed himself as doubting his ability to keep matters going as they should.

“Now, don’t you worry a bit about that,” said the director, “we know more about the outside influences that are at work than you do, and have been keeping an eye upon affairs, and somebody is going to lose his opportunity of going to school, if they are not careful. When you go back to school, you just tell those boys what you want them to do, and if they refuse, show them the door, and we will take care of the rest. We do not propose to allow two overgrown boys, who do not care whether the school is a success or not, to run the school.”

Tom thought over this seriously. He did not like to be the cause of some one not having the

privilege of attending school, but their conduct was almost unbearable at times.

In a few days one of the troublesome boys flatly refused to do what had been requested of him and seemed anxious to indulge in a personal encounter with Tom. It might have been difficult to tell the result of such an encounter, for the boy was considerably larger than Tom. But Tom's judgment told him that acts of violence would not carry his point as well as the suggestion of his director friend. So he forthwith ordered the boy to leave the room, and instructed the janitor to see to it that he did not come upon the school-ground again without his permission. He left in a surly mood, not knowing just why he obeyed that order, but there was fire in Tom's eye, and at the critical moment his nerve deserted him, and before he really knew what he was doing he was on his way home, hurling back epithets that did no real harm to the teacher.

The school quieted down in a short time, but still the other mischievous boy seemed restless, for it had been part of their plot to work together in this business, and now he was left alone. Things were not long in coming to a crisis in

his case and he was summarily dismissed.

Tom went home that evening with a heavy heart, not knowing what might be the outcome of the whole affair. He did not sleep much that night and went to school the next day in a state of considerable excitement. One of those boys was upon the school ground playing ball, and Tom did not know just what might happen before the day ended.

When the dismissed boys went home they made a great tale of it to their parents. One of them told his father plainly that he would not go back to that school any more so long as Tom Wilkins were the teacher. He had been having his way about everything he desired to do or not to do, and because of a disagreement between his parents as to the proper way to control the boy, he had secured control himself, not only of himself, but by the help of his mother, had about secured control of his father also. This boy never came back.

The father of the other boy heard his story and quietly said to him: "Do up your work for the evening and get your lessons for to-morrow. I shall go to school with you to-morrow, and

we'll get things straightened out all right."

On the way to school this parent met a member of the school board, told him of what had happened, assured him that he was heartily ashamed of his boy's conduct, and pledged his support to the teacher and the board in getting the matter adjusted. The board member told him that his boy would have to make due apology before the whole school, and pledge the strictest obedience, or he would not be permitted to enter school any more that term. The parent thanked him, and assured him that all that was required would be done.

The first person Tom met as he reached the top of the stairs was this parent, who greeted him cordially and touching upon the event of the day before, assured him that his boy would have to make the matter right as soon as school opened, and he meant to stay right there and see it done right. School was called, and as soon as all were quietly seated, Tom said to the school: "Henry has something to say to the school, and I am sure we shall all be glad to give him our attention."

Henry stepped upon the rostrum, made a neat

little apology for his conduct, and promised to be obedient the remainder of his attendance at school, and then sat down and cried. His father rose and in a neat talk assured the pupils that he did not approve the conduct of his son on the previous day, and felt sure that he saw the matter differently now, and then turning to the teacher requested him to keep him informed as to his son's conduct, and to depend upon him to assist him at any time in making his son obedient.

The day passed off smoothly, the effect of these proceedings being a deep impression upon the minds of the pupils in regard to discipline. Tom thought over the trying episode often. His final conclusion was that dismissing the one boy who returned and reformed was a good thing for the boy.

He was not so sure about the other boy. He wished that he had a heart big enough to enfold the boy and make him do right in spite of his training or lack of it. But he was young, himself, and while he thought that he might some day acquire that power over the rougher element, he realized that he did not possess it entirely

yet, and so while he regretted that the boy was out of school, he felt just a little relieved that he did not come back. So did the school.

Perhaps this was a wicked thought. Perhaps it is the mission of the public school to recognize no incorrigibles, but to lead the most degraded and rebellious pieces of humanity immediately into the sunshine of higher life, and we suppose it is. But we are recording history rather than theory, and the foregoing tells what transpired in this particular case.

Let us not neglect to say that Henry kept his pledge, and received a fine education later, and Tom lived to hear him say to him that that episode was the making of him.

The remainder of the term went by profitably and the board that had stood by Tom so faithfully, stood by him still, and re-appointed him for the ensuing year.

The indulgent reader may think that we are painting Tom's successes in too glowing colors, but we are not. It is not the province of the historian to make events, but to record them, and this we have done. Tom was no more successful than any other teacher might be in gov-

erning his school if he and the board work in harmony and have the support of the better class of people of the community. We are believing that the greater part of the difficulties that teachers meet with in the matter of government are due to a lack of support on the part of the school board, or a lack of harmony of opinion as to what is best to be done.

Think it over for yourself, and then decide whether or not we are right about it. It may seem to you that we are placing too much responsibility upon the directors, but we can not think so.

CHAPTER XII.

A LITTLE POLITICS.

The next year Tom concluded that a library would be a good thing for the school. He donated a few books himself, and asked some of his friends to donate what they could spare. Soon a handsome little collection was secured, just the germ of a library to which many additions have been made. The directors furnished a neat book case, and people wondered why the thing had not been thought of before. You know there are many good things that might be done in the world, if we only thought of them. Well, Tom thought of some of them.

So strong had grown his hold upon this community after his first two years of trial that no one thought of replacing him. The people did not feel inclined to experiment in the matter of hiring a principal when they knew just what they would get in Tom. Moreover, his fellow teachers regarded him so highly that not one of them would make application against

him. His fellow teachers had nothing but praise for him, while his pupils were among his strongest supporters. His method of governing his school was very much on the line of letting the school govern itself with the query, "Is it right?" always in plain view. Of course, if a show of authority was ever necessary, it was of the absolute variety, but it did not often happen that it was necessary.

With these remarks on the success of the school, and with the additional statement that each year witnessed the success of one or more of Tom's pupils in the county superintendent's examination, we will pass over the next three years, and find ourselves at the time of the preliminary talk that comes up before the county convention names candidates for county offices.

It was conceded by prominent members of the dominant party of the county that the young man who had so accidentally slipped into the office of county superintendent must be defeated at the coming election. A number of teachers made themselves available for the place and expressed a willingness to do the defeating. Some of Tom's political friends figured that

their particular community had not been honored with a county office for a quarter of a century, if you except the office held by the teacher-politician, before mentioned, which he secured after having severed his residence in the little village. They also figured that this was the banner precinct in the county for the dominant party. On these grounds, and because of his success in teaching, they urged Tom to allow his name to go before the convention.

This was something to study over. But finally it was decided to do so. There were six candidates before that convention for that office. Among the number was the afore-mentioned teacher-politician, who had hacked about at several odd jobs, barely making a living, and who thought this a good opportunity to break into county politics again. He visited the community in which Tom lived, interviewed the leading politicians in an endeavor to secure the delegation from his "old home," arguing that he was entitled to it. He was told that if Tom Wilkins wanted to make the race he should have the local delegation.

Tom made a partial canvas of the county, re-

ceiving a rather chilly reception among the politicians at the county seat, who were disposed to look upon him as rather young and innocent of the ways of the professional politician to make a successful race against such a hustler as the present incumbent, who had really taken the breath away from some of them. Tom mentally predicted his own defeat at the approaching convention. However, he continued to look around in his own interest, even though he believed the combination to be against him.

The primaries were held in due time, Tom receiving the delegation from his own home. The practiced politicians had watched the primaries very closely. The teacher politician saw from what he learned that his chance for the nomination was very slim unless he could get Tom out of the way. He lost no time in calling upon Tom at his home and told him that everything had gone against Tom in every part of the county except his home, advised him to withdraw from the race and turn his delegates over to him, arguing that that was the only way to defeat a certain gentleman who had for a number of years been superintendent of the city

schools at the county seat, arguing also, that Tom would receive so few votes that he would ever after be ashamed of his effort.

To his chagrin Tom told him quietly that he meant to stay in the race until he was defeated by the convention. Convention day arrived. Tom was there with his friends, and things appeared more favorable than they had been represented by his anxious opponent, and once it seemed as if he would be successful, but a sudden turn in affairs threw a number of votes to the ex-city superintendent, and Tom was defeated, though he was the last man down.

Congratulations were showered upon the successful candidate, but it was also whispered around that Tom Wilkins had more friends than ever, and would be an important factor in some future convention. He shook the hand of the successful candidate and said in his usual good humor:

“Now you have beaten me, and I shall help to make you regret it some day, by doing everything I can to elect you, and then when you see what a big thing you have on your hands, you will wish you had not done so.”

He kept his word and worked for the one who had defeated him in convention. That was right, wasn't it? Oh, yes, of course, but not all defeated candidates do so. Tom had a moral standard and tried to live up to it.

Election day came. The ex-city superintendent was elected by a small majority. The campaign had been a very hotly contested one, and quite expensive. The young man who was defeated came out of the office about as rich as he was when he went into it, but considerably wiser. Tom went on with his school work, congratulating himself that he had made his trip up Salt River in warm weather, rather than in the chilly breezes of early November.

This new superintendent planned great things that he intended to do. He meant to be very severe in his examinations, and to have very rigid rules concerning renewals, but at the same time he meant to feel the pulse of the teachers, and keep them on his side if possible.

He assisted the committee to prepare a program for the next meeting of the teachers' association, and insisted very strongly that Tom Wilkins be assigned the subject, "Renewal of

Certificates," for he wanted to learn his views on that subject, and in the discussion that should follow, the views of the teachers in general. He also hoped quietly that Tom would prove to the teachers with that paper that the convention had done the right thing in nominating himself instead of Tom.

Tom prepared his paper carefully, half suspecting the trap, threw into it a bit of spice, and read it before the association, receiving a round of applause at the finish. Having access to the original manuscript, we shall give that paper in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XIII.

“THE RENEWAL OF CERTIFICATES.” A PAPER.

“It is with great reluctance that I undertake to produce an article on this subject. I am certain that I judge the spirit of the teachers and the superintendent aright when I say that none among you will be so ungenerous as to take a single word or thought in this article as personal in the least degree.

“And I feel sure, also, that the older teachers will find nothing new in this; and those of the younger teachers who remain in the work ten or fifteen years will, sooner or later, come to some of my conclusions,

“I beg your indulgence while I note a few of my thoughts on the examination of applicants for teachers licenses, before entering directly upon the subject assigned me, first, because they bear directly upon the subject, and second, because I don’t know that I shall ever have a better opportunity of inflicting those thoughts upon a patient audience.

“I maintain, despite the Jeffersonian doctrine that all men are created equal, that our endowments are as diversified as it is possible to con-

ceive. Not all may lead; some must follow, and are able to do nothing more—that keeps them busy.

“The teacher must be a leader; a person of kindly disposition, with patience, forbearance, energy, keen perception, quick and correct judgment, and must be continually advancing. He must be honorable and moral. He must possess undaunted courage, manhood, sympathy and truth. He must be zealous, ingenious, conscientious and neat. He must have health and not too much wealth, or he will leave the pleasant and inspiring walks of teaching, with all their enchantments, their brilliant prospects and numerous advantages for other walks of life.

“Moreover, he must have knowledge. He must possess an analytical mind as well as a synthetic. He must possess the art of talking plainly, simply, entertainingly and truthfully about what he knows. He must be able to calculate the interest on notes and bonds, the possession of which might lead him to the insane asylum, and the bare handling of which would make his heart flutter as did the heart of the savage when he discharged a rifle for the first time.

“Above all, he must have a good memory; one crowded full of tables, rules, exceptions, formulæ, pictures of countries, facts and dates

of history, illustrations, explanations, etc., etc., that he may meet the superintendent upon his own grounds, and he must be able to pick out enough of these memory gems to place beside the proper questions to induce the aforesaid official to affix his official signature to that wonderful parchment called a "Certificate."

"The point which I hope I have made clear, bears repetition. It is, that of all the varied qualifications required of a teacher, he is examined, practically, upon but one, and that often the most treacherous—the MEMORY.

"Our examiners are not in the least to blame for this. The law lays down their duty plainly, and they must follow the instructions. In part this is excellent. A person who aspires to teach should have a well-balanced education. However, it must occur to you, that not every one who can answer questions, can teach. It has been the experience of some of our most conscientious superintendents that some of those who received the highest grades at the examination, made the most emphatic failures in the school-room, and that some of those who barely passed, honored their chosen profession.

"Our earlier legislators formulated the laws regulating the licensing of teachers at a time when the blue-backed speller and Daboll's Arithmetic were the standards of an education.

More recent law-makers have added to the list of subjects to be examined upon—under the memory test.

“So, while this is perhaps a poor way, it is at present the only way, and we may as well make the best of it. We must be examined, and we may as well abide by it peaceably, for we will have to abide by it.

“But how much more accurately, and how much more satisfactorily, can an intelligent, conscientious superintendent determine my ability to teach and yours, by spending even a short time in the presence of the actual work!

“This may come, and applicants may be asked to conduct yonder arithmetic class as a specimen of their ability to do so.

“Lincoln once desired a certain person, whose ability he had tested, appointed to a certain position, and in a short note satirized our entire system of examinations. He wrote, in substance: ‘Please appoint John to that place. He is a good man for the place, and I should like you to appoint him, even if he can’t tell the exact shade of Cæsar’s hair!’

“But we were to discuss ‘Renewals,’ not original issues. The law plainly says that the superintendent must examine the applicant for an original issue, which is renewable at his option, but doesn’t say how often; for if it did it would

kill the option; so I take it that he may renew it as often as he pleases, or may refuse to renew at all if he pleases to do so, with or without cause.

“Let us consider an energetic young person who is teaching his first school under his first certificate. He has been very busy doing his very best with a mixed school, and it is his first year out of school himself. His mind is centered on success in the work in hand. This work is chiefly primary—something which is a complete study to him itself. He had almost forgotten his own journey through it. However, he has taught a good school, given splendid satisfaction, is highly elated with his success—proud of it.

“The superintendent has visited his school, inspected his work, pronounced it good, and encouraged him in his efforts.

“Now, in all that time, it is quite remarkable how quickly many of the facts he had fixed in his mind during his attendance at school have dimmed and vanished; and how he begins to realize this as examination day approaches. Then he studies, worries and frets.

“‘What will he ask me?’ That’s the all-important question.

“Now, my question is, Is that bright young person to be set aside without another trial sim-

ply because he could not remember who superseded Burnside in the command of the Army of the Potomac, or failed in the short time allotted him to find the width of the outer third of a partnership grindstone?

“Contrast this now, with the unsatisfactory work of an older teacher who is retrograding and doesn’t care who knows it; whose work is done in a slip-shod manner, the easiest way to get through the day; whose choice of evening amusements is not the most elevating; who makes a bad impression upon the superintendent and the patrons of the school; who doesn’t want that school any more any way, but means to underbid another teacher and get his school, because one of the directors is a relative of his and has another director under his thumb; and then comes up and happens to remember the answers to the questions on his slips.

“If you were superintendent, and knew these circumstances, which of these two would you feel like continuing in the divine work of teaching?

“Again, take the case of the primary teacher in our graded schools, who has her hands full almost to overflowing, and who, to keep up with the alert examiners who are probably plotting to see how many of the teachers of the county are able to solve certain problems, has to sacri-

fice her necessary recreations and perhaps her health, all on account of that dreaded examination, though, in truth, her work is excellent.

“Now, contrast this with the teacher who is working with more advanced pupils, who has all the term dwelt upon and often reviewed the very ground most likely to be touched upon by the examiner. He goes to the examination without reviewing, looks at the questions and smiles, and wishes he had an opportunity to answer them off-hand to save writing. Such an easy examination! Now, is he really brighter than she? No, he is merely up on this particular line. It’s his specialty. He has worked it for a year, and he can work it for an examination.

“If you were superintendent, would you refuse to renew that tried and true primary teacher’s license because her grades footed up a total lacking $\frac{3}{8}$ of 1 percent of passing?

“But of course our teachers must be progressive. I don’t want to go on record as advocating the granting of certificates to those not deserving, or of renewing certificates for those who cease to be progressive, who are actually retrograding, just because they are nice fellows or agreeable ladies. Neither do I believe in granting certificates or renewing them for the sake of charity, if the recipient is undeserving. It is misplaced charity, or rather, it is uncharitable

to those who patronize the school and pay for it. Other charitable institutions are cheaper.

“If the superintendent has any means of knowing a teacher’s worth, and knows that he has a well-rounded education, not merely a memory stuffed for the occasion, he is safe in renewing his certificate. But if the renewing of that license should make that erstwhile alert teacher rest on his oars, drift off into the dreamy hallucination of his own infallibility, he had better require him to take the examination. For it is the teacher who dotes upon infallibility in the first person who needs watching. He had better do a little memory stuffing than do nothing.

“I have heard it proudly said, and used as a convincing argument by a radical person, that a teacher should be put through a hard examination at least once a year, because the government has its civil service examination very strict. But I should like you to consider a mail clerk’s examination, and see the difference. He is given a certain railroad line and told to prepare on it. He knows exactly what he will have to do, and stuffs it into his memory, and is examined upon all of it. But has he improved his general education? No, some other things, I dare say, were crowded out to make room for that.

“Our memories are like a large valise, packed with a variety of articles. The story is told of a lordly person, who gave his valet a list of the things he wanted taken along on a journey. The valise was carefully packed with everything requisite, and a few more which the dutiful servant thought his lordship might have forgotten to mention. At every stop they made, several of the articles were called for. Now, the servant had placed those things on top which he thought most likely to be called for first. But he greatly vexed his lordship by having missed his judgement, and having to hunt through the pack for the articles named, often not finding them. So he re-arranged the whole pack, only to find that he had placed the wrong articles on top. He had them all there, but he lost his job because he couldn't find them.

“How often have you stuffed your memory, carefully placing on top the things you expected to need first, and then have gone to the examination room to find that you had to overhaul the pack?

“However, I think this problem of the Renewal of Certificates, as well as original issues, which is probably more important, will be settled, and the teachers will have a hand in settling them.

“Some way out of this mental distortionary

method will be found, which will place teaching on a higher level than it has ever reached. What it will be, I dare not predict, but it will come. It cannot always be, when so many things must enter into the make-up of a good teacher, that we are continually to be drawn out in the direction of memory!

“Some of our wisest educators are thinking deeply on this subject, and something is going to come of it!”

CHAPTER XIV.

SOME MORE POLITICS.

When Tom took his seat, after having finished reading the foregoing paper, the superintendent took the floor and tried to make some remarks in his own defense, showing all that he had taken some of the remarks in the paper as if they were intended to rub him personally. But such was not the case. However, a superficial friendship existed between them, and a few years later Tom was employed to teach in the county institute.

The turns in the political world brought Tom the nomination the next time with very little effort on his part, notwithstanding that the ex-city superintendent would have been pleased to succeed himself. They had talked the matter over often, and Tom had insisted that he would not be a candidate for the nomination if the present incumbent wanted to serve another term.

The matter was so undecided that Tom did not bother about it very much. Scheming politi-

cians, however, took the matter up, and not desiring to nominate all the candidates from the county seat, and having a few that just must be nominated, sacrificed the chances of the present incumbent and the superintendent's office being the last to fill in the convention—the tail of the court house, as it is called—offered the nomination to Tom by acclamation.

We do not mean to take you through his campaign further than to say that he did everything in his power to divorce that office from the accustomed political methods, tried to keep it free from all personal feeling, often incurred the displeasure of the committee by demurring to many of their suggestions as to the kind of campaign he should conduct. He treated his opponent with the utmost courtesy, and won out in the election by a reasonable majority, though much hard work had been done to defeat him.

He entered upon the duties of his office on a bright frosty morning in December. That day was spent in getting acquainted with the books and fixtures of the office. He was amazed to find the office so scantily furnished. He visited some of the other offices and made comparison.

They had about everything they needed, while he had practically nothing. He wondered why this partiality was shown. One of the other officers told him that probably the superintendents heretofore had never asked for anything better, being probably timid about it or afraid of making enemies of the board by seeming extravagant.

Tom thought over this and decided that if he did not get his office fitted up with those things that he deemed it needed, it should not be on account of any delicacy on his part about asking for the improvements. He could not figure out any real reason why his office should be the "tail of the court house." He decided to see the proper authorities about the matter.

On the second day of his official career, he visited the little school in district 6, where years ago he had begun his career as a teacher. That visit was full of pleasant remembrances, carrying him back to one of the happiest periods of his life.

A great many visitors called upon Tom during the first few days of his term of office. To all these he extended a most cordial welcome. His

conversation was genteel, his manner polite and attractive, giving his guests so comfortable a feeling that they went away with a feeling that they should like to come back again. True courtesy, you know, is one necessary ingredient of him who desires to be successful in any public office. Tom practiced it through the goodness of his heart, and it was so natural to him that no one could suppose for a moment that he was making any special effort to make the right kind of an impression. He had laid it down as an inviolable rule that all comers must have the most courteous treatment, even to book agents, and some say that is carrying his official etiquette farther than a great many others do. This course won him many friends, as it will do for any one.

The greater part of Tom's time was taken up with the work of supervision, and he found the visiting of schools a pleasant task. He observed many things that made him think. The different schools and the differences in the local communities, the differences in the teachers themselves all made impressions upon him. He was pained to see that so many of the schools

were without the necessary apparatus, and furnished in the simplest manner. In many of them libraries had never been dreamed of, dictionaries not even being provided. Many of the rooms were small, dark and dingy, and had not seen a white-wash brush or even a scrub-rag in years. Wall maps were an absent quantity, while the blackboards were often rude, painted-wood affairs that were unsatisfactory in the extreme.

But this condition was not altogether on account of the poverty of the districts or the stinginess of directors, for several of them had invested in lovely charts that told all there is to learn about everything at a glance, being so absolutely perfect (as represented by the enterprising agent) as to almost dispense with the services of a teacher. And they had paid enough for these gaudily illustrated self-educators to have provided the school with an "International" and a handsome collection of choice books for a school library.

Why this state of affairs? Why, because the average member of the board of directors, especially in the rural districts, does not know

what the school really does need, and the teacher, if he knows, himself, is often too timid to insist upon the purchase of supplies which might cause him to be criticised for seeming extravagance, which criticism might result in the future employment of a teacher who would not be quite so officious, for while the directors are often ignorant as to the needs of the school, they are often sensitive about being told so by the person they have employed to teach their school. Herein the teacher differs from the agent.

The latter goes after the board for business; tells them, and often convinces them, that they know very little about the needs of the school; proceeds to play upon this ignorance; expatiates upon the merits of his particular piece of merchandise; proves to them that their children are a set of dullards simply because they have never had the advantages that can be derived from the use of this particular chart; shows them that the intelligence of the community will rise at a bound from the time they sign the order for the chart, and that that district will become famous for the enlightenment of its citizens, and thus

be a most desirable place in which to live, and the price of land will increase to such an extent that the price of the chart that did it all will pale into insignificance by comparison; and gets the order, because that is his business. If all these arguments had not secured the desired results, others would have been produced.

Are school boards really imposed upon in this way? Well, you go into the field and see. You will not always have to go into the rural districts, either, for your information.

Tom felt his way cautiously, as many a superintendent has done, who has not had the experience that is gained by the teacher who teaches in many different communities. He made copious notes of what he saw, and as he studied over these it began to dawn upon him what an herculean task there was before him if he undertook to correct all the ills that he had already found in the school system of the county. He predicted that if he tried to change too many things at once he would be met with severe criticism which, while it would not bother him personally, would hamper his usefulness greatly. So he studied the situation and kept his own

counsel for a time.

He met and talked with many characters of board members. Some of them seemed not to know that they had any other duties to perform than to employ the teacher, buy the fuel and take care of the door-key during the vacation. One director with whom Tom talked seemed to think that his sole duty in his official capacity lay in keeping the taxes of the district down. Did you ever hear of such a thing? Don't get alarmed now, you know you have if you have observed men and things.

All of this was a fund of problems to keep one busy thinking for a long time. When Tom found himself alone in the office on Saturday mornings (for his visitors came chiefly in the afternoon) he went over what he had observed, and wondered if he would ever be able to cause the light to break in some of these districts. Progress is a matter of growth in matters educational, as well as in other things, and Tom felt sure that he could sow some seed that would be profitable in the future. What should it be? Where should he begin? It just dawned upon him that the addition of a few books to the

scanty furnishings of the greater part of the schools would be a step in the right direction. But he did not know how to procure the books. In many of the districts the directors would refuse to use the public funds for that purpose. Still he felt that if he could ever get the children interested in the reading of well-selected supplementary books, they would leave the right impressions on their parents, and more books would be provided when the parents saw the advantages they were giving their children.

Parents are ruled by their children more than most of them are willing to admit, and one splendid way to gain the good will of the parent is first to gain the good will of the child. Parents naturally think their children are fully as intelligent as other children, and that is right, too. A mother will love you forever if you tell her what a darling little angel her first-born is, and if it happens to be a boy, the father will in all probability insist upon your staying for dinner, and think you the wisest man in the neighborhood, if you happen to suggest that he is "a chip off of the old block."

You don't believe that? Well you have not

observed as closely as some people have. This same species of egotism (for admiring one's own children is very much the same as admiring one's own self) will often show itself in a defensive manner, when the boy goes home with a tale of woe a yard long, and probably most of it manufactured on the way home, about how that teacher abused him at school, and the parent will immediately don his fighting clothes and proceed to the educational institution to teach that young upstart of a teacher that his boy is as good as any body else's boy, and must not be abused. It's the way of the world, and many teachers will say "Amen," as they read this, which will be responded to by a few parents.

But enough of this diversion! We shall try to get back to Tom in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

SOME IMPROVEMENTS.

One Saturday morning Tom entered his office in rather gloomy spirits. He had been in office about three weeks and had not turned the world over yet. Of course, dear reader, the world had turned over several times, but Tom had not caused it to do so. Besides, we did not mean that as literally as you probably took it. We meant 'Tom's little world, which comprised the educational interests of the county. He began to see the enormity of the task before him, and particularly so when he remembered that his chief influence over directors is of an advisory nature.

He looked around his office and found two flat-top tables, three chairs, one massive wooden case containing shelves for books and pigeon-holes for filing papers, and one tumble-down stove. A fine array of furniture!

While he was engaged in these observations in came the young man who had occupied the

office four years before, and who had been defeated by the ex-city superintendent. He greeted Tom cordially and received a hearty welcome from the present superintendent.

“I have been wanting to come in to see you ever since you have been in office,” he said, “but I have been so busy on the days that you were here that I have not had the time. I want to congratulate you and wish you success. Well, it looks quite natural in here. You see I have not been in the office more than twice since I left it, and then I received such chilly receptions that I quit coming.”

Tom knew that there had been considerable feeling between his two predecessors on account of things that had come up during the campaign four years before, but he did not think the rupture had been so great, so he said:

“I am glad to welcome you, and to assure you that you will always be a welcome visitor in this office while I am here. I want you to come as often as you wish, and feel at liberty to go over as much of the old as you wish to.”

How much better to have such feelings even for one's political opponents, than to testify to

the world that we are narrow and selfish. The educational forces of the county are weak enough when they are united, and they are rendered much less useful when those who should work together allow partisan thoughts to cause them to pull in opposite directions.

Before the visitor left he showed Tom more in a half-hour about the books and papers of the office than he could have found out in a day. Of course, he would have found all these things, but how much nicer to have some one to go over the ground with him. He said to himself that when he left the office he would have things in such shape that he could initiate his successor in a short time, and he meant to do so no matter who that successor might be.

Tom's visitor left shortly with a promise to return some time, and Tom continued his observations. When the board of supervisors met in the spring, Tom requested the committee on court house to call at his office, for he had something to talk to them about.

They came, three in number. Tom treated them courteously, and soon came to the point for which he had requested their presence. He

called their attention to the scantily furnished room, and asked them to make a comparison of the furnishings of this room, with those of the other offices in the court house. They talked the matter over, deciding that there was not as much in this room as the others had, but one of them thought that this is only the superintendent's office, and it didn't need much furniture. The other superintendents got along with this and Tom ought to do the same.

“Now, gentlemen,” said Tom, “that is not business, and you know it. The spirit that you display in the matter of properly furnishing this office is the spirit that obstructs the progress of the schools all over the county. There is a general feeling that ‘any old thing’ is good enough for the schools, and many boards have acted on that supposition in the matter of school furnishing to the detriment of the work of the schools. You know, when you take a second sober thought, that there is nothing that has the influence over the rising generations, the future citizens of the republic, that the schools have. That influence will be an exalted one or the other kind in proportion to the care and atten-

tion we give the schools. If we neglect them and furnish them carelessly we inculcate into the minds of the pupils the spirit of carelessness that will go with them through life. This office is necessarily the center of the educational system of the county, and if it is neglected the teachers will carry to their districts the idea that it does not matter much how school is kept, and the influence will be bad. Reforms must begin at the top, and if we wish to see the school rooms of the county neat and attractive, this office must take the lead in the matter."

By this time the members of the committee were looking quite sober. They had never heard of county superintendent talking so plainly and so positively about what his office needed. They had been accustomed to have that official suggest timidly that certain things would be helpful to the work, but appearing as if about to collapse as the suggestion was ventured, and they had turned the superintendent down so often that he had quit asking for things, and determined to get along the best he could with what he had rather than run the risk of incurring the displeasure of the members of the

committee. Here was Tom Wilkins arguing the matter with members of the county board, and his arguments had the elements of sincerity and sound sense about them. This was what sobered the committee.

“Well,” said an elderly member of the committee, “what is it you would like to have?”

“Gentlemen,” said Tom, “I should like to have a roll top desk in which to keep the stationery of the office. These desks are now used in most every business in the country and are a great convenience to business men.”

There was not a desk of this description in the court house, and the spokesman of the committee inquired of Tom what it would cost. Tom told him, and pressing him to know if he thought that piece of furniture necessary to his work, Tom replied that while it was not absolutely essential it would greatly increase the ability of the superintendent to keep things in some sort of shape. He pointed out to them that so far as absolute necessity was concerned, it was really not any more necessary to the office than a self-binder is to a well-regulated farm. Wheat could be cut with a sickle and

bound by hand. This clinched the argument and Tom was given permission to order whatever he wanted in the way of furniture. After the committee left the office, one of them said to another:

“Well, after all, Tom Wilkins is right. I know we have neglected that office, but no one ever called our attention to it like he has done. I predict that fellow will put new life into the school system of the county. He seems to be manly and not afraid to ask for what he thinks he needs.”

Tom's desk came in due time, and was a subject of considerable curiosity to the other officials and the usual loungers around the court house for several days. Some of the other officers thought that a desk like that was needed in their own offices. They consulted Tom about how he secured his. Just think of it! Consulting the county superintendent about the furnishings of his office, when in the very large majority of the counties the furnishings of his office is not worthy of notice even. The result was that before Tom had spent six months in the office, half of the offices in the court house

were provided with desks of the same pattern, and great blessings they were, too.

Do you believe that Tom lowered himself in the estimation of that committee by insisting upon improvement? You know he did not. People like a man to have positive ideas and to stand up for them. The surprise about it was that this spirit was found in the office of county superintendent.

CHAPTER XVI.

INSTITUTE PLANS. SOME DIRECTORS AND SOME
TEACHERS.

Tom made arrangements for his first Institute. He felt that the teachers ought to know his views on Institutes so that they might the more readily co-operate with him for the success of the work in general. His circular announcing the date and general plan of the Institute was rather longer than those usually sent out from the office. He regretted this, but did not see how he could make it any shorter and say what he wanted to say. Besides giving the usual dates and general points of information, he made these general observations:

“If you have the proper professional spirit, you will be there without any further invitation or information than simply to know the date of the Institute. Attendance simply because it is asked by the superintendent, and for fear of incurring his displeasure in case of absence, has not the right motive behind it and is non-professional in the highest degree. It is the duty of the county superintendent to render the

greatest possible service to the schools of the county; in fact, he has obligated himself to do so, and he is not fulfilling that obligation if he does not fill the schools with teachers morally above reproach and professionally above criticism. The present incumbent feels the weight of this obligation and expects to exert his utmost endeavors to do his duty as he sees it, and confidently expects the hearty support of every person in the county who has the welfare of the schools at heart; and what a ridiculous proposition it would be to suppose that any one who expects to teach should not be among the number!

“Your humble servant, the superintendent, desires to say to you that he has served in every capacity in the school room except the exclusively primary or the exclusively scientific departments, and firmly believes that his constant participation in the work of the —— County Teachers’ Association and the various Institutes has been of more value to him than any other one or two things. Constant association with educational minds helps to form the habits of teaching aright; and correct habits are invaluable. Having served in the different departments of school work, he feels that he can truly sympathize with any teacher in his or her troubles and difficulties. Therefore, he desires to be re-

garded as the friend of every true teacher everywhere.

“The purpose of the Institute is not to prepare teachers for examination, nor is it to show how much the teacher does not know, nor is it to show how much the instructors do know, nor is it to give the superintendent an opportunity to show any of the authority that some might think attaches to the office, nor is it to give the teachers an opportunity to cultivate the social features only. No! It has a much higher and nobler purpose, viz.: It is to help poor teachers (if there be any such) to become good teachers, and to help good teachers to become better teachers, to place teaching on a higher plane, to increase enthusiasm, and to unite the educational forces of the county in such a manner as shall result in raising the standard of education in the county.

“This county enjoys the proud distinction of being in the front rank of counties in this part of the state in the work of her schools. Let us maintain that reputation and improve upon it all we can. It is pleasant to know that all it requires is, that all work together in great earnestness.”

This circular was sent to every teacher in the county, and was received most favorably by the best class of teachers. First class talent had

been secured to conduct the work of the institute, and every one believed that the work would be fully up to the standard.

Many things furnished much food for thought. During the first six months of his service, Tom made notes of those things that he thought were injuring the work of the schools. These he wrote out carefully in the form of short talks which he gave to the teachers as opportunity offered.

He had attended the meeting of the State Teachers' Association and received much encouragement and many helpful suggestions. He wondered how any county superintendent could afford to stay away from these meetings. But he noticed that a great many did. The wonderfully fine lectures that were given at the evening sessions inspired him to greater effort. He made notes of many of the points that came up at the meeting and looked over them often.

Of all the things that Tom had to ponder over, probably nothing occupied more of his time this first year of his official work than did the teacher and the director. There is an old saying that "As the teacher is, so is the school."

While that is nearly the truth, still this thoughtful person could not leave the director out of the combination. What an influence good, sensible directors have over teachers, and particularly young teachers, and over pupils! Tom had known where the indifference of directors had allowed the school to drift to the verge of ruin, notwithstanding that the teacher was fairly sensible.

By this time he knew a great many directors personally, and while most of them were good men, there were also a large number of them who were not capable of performing the duties of that office as they should be performed.

Some had accepted the position to be exempt from the annual road labor that the rural citizens are expected to do. Some schemed for the place because some dear relative was out of a job, and the school in that district would just suit the aforesaid dear relative. One gentleman with a business turn of mind wanted to be director that he might be influential in securing the appointment of the son of a widow who lived in the neighborhood to the position of teacher. You see, there was a balance of near-

ly a hundred dollars due him from the widow on a debt which her departed husband had contracted, and he did not wish to press the matter, for he knew, as every one else did, that she had hard enough a time to keep the wolf from the door, and send her numerous flock to school to get such education as might be of use to them in the future, and assist her in providing the necessaries of life. He felt that if he got this boy appointed, he would get his money and at the same time people would praise him for having done a kind deed for a worthy family. But secretly the money was the stronger consideration for him.

One director of Tom's acquaintance was somewhat of a carpenter, and knew that there would be some repairs needed on the school house, and felt that if he were on the board he would get the greater part of the work. Don't criticise our knowledge of the law that does not permit directors to let contracts to themselves. They did not. The contracts in this case were let to this director's hired man (who couldn't saw to a line if his life depended upon it) and the director did the greater part of the work. They

divided the money somehow. We will guess how.

There were also quite a number of directors who sacrificed much of their valuable time in the interest of the schools. Such a variety of officers must of necessity have a variety of opinions as to what good school is and how to get it.

Then there were the teachers, themselves. Here was one who was teaching just to keep himself in pocket change while he was preparing to enter one of the professions. Tom could not blame him, knowing what he did about the salaries and the uncertainty as to positions. Here was a young lady who has been unsuccessful in her social conquests, and felt she must repair her depleted treasury in some work, and teaching looked more inviting than the work of a servant. And yet we have known servants to have money on interest, and teachers, too, once in a great while. Then there was another young lady, just barely of the legal age to be licensed to teach, who could pursue her social conquests and teach school too; who could leave off at any time that her "fairy prince" arrived upon the scene. Then there was the old timer,

who had taught so long that he was fit for nothing else. He had found out years ago that after a man has taught a certain number of years, it is the hardest business there is to quit. He has often faced the proposition that many another teacher has faced: It is either get a school at whatever salary, or go to the poor house.

There were also some teachers who loved the work so dearly that they would never leave it until they were compelled to, and who managed to save something of their earnings, and perhaps establish a home of their own in their own snug little building. But these cases were extremely rare.

What records there were in the office showed that not less than one-fourth of the teachers left the business each year for various reasons. All these conditions taken together convinced Tom more strongly that his task was no easy one.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN EXAMINATION.

Tom had often felt perplexed over the matter of teachers' salaries. He had a great desire to raise the standard of education in his county, and reasoned with himself that it would be a very difficult matter to secure a better grade of teachers, or to get his present corps to improve themselves as he felt they should at the present rate of wages. The problem was, how to get the directors to pay for the kind of teachers they should have. Directors are, as Tom knew very well, and as you know very well yourself if you have ever interviewed them from the standpoint of an applicant, very shy about raising wages. Some of them seem to think that fifteen dollars a month is enough for any teacher. "Why that's as much as I pay my farm hand," said one director, "and he works all day and Saturdays too."

Let us think over the subject and see whether that farm hand has not a better position so far

as salary is concerned than the teacher has. Take an average price of thirty-five dollars per month, six months in the year and you have two hundred ten dollars for the year. Now count the teacher's board at say three dollars a week for fifty-two weeks and you have one hundred fifty-six dollars.

But, you say, he only teaches six months. Yes, but he has to live twelve months to be ready to begin the next term, does he not? And still you argue that many of the teachers board at home. Well, isn't it worth just as much to board at home as it is to board some where else?

Then set aside fifty dollars for clothing, ten dollars for professional literature, ten more for institutes and teachers' meetings, and without allowing anything for the luxuries or pleasures of life you have counted up more than his salary amounted to. The farm hand gets his wages every month in the year and his board besides. Which of the two can save the more money for the period of life when they will not be able to keep up the active duties of life?

The teachers are sometimes to blame for not

receiving as much for their work as they should. They are too much afraid of losing their positions altogether to venture to ask for what they really earn.

Then, too, the too frequent changes in the schools suggested to Tom a possible reason for the salaries remaining as low as they were. Teachers, also, sometimes lost their professional pride sufficiently to allow themselves to come into competition with their fellows, and by cross bidding, if they did not secure a position which some other seemed able to hold, at least caused him to accept the position at a reduced salary to keep it at all.

With these things on his mind, Tom conducted his first examination. The work of looking over the papers of the dozen applicants who wrote this examination occupied several days. Tom had concluded, and we think correctly, that if it were a little harder to become a teacher, there would not be quite so many, and the matter of injurious competition would at least be partially averted. So you need not be surprised to learn that very few passed this first examination. This fact soon became noised around and

quite a number who had decided to try the examination under the new superintendent, concluded to go to school a while longer.

One day shortly after sending out the reports of the examination, a rather large, burly gentleman came into the office to "see about" Jane's certificate. Jane had failed to pass and her "Pa" was indignant, and had come up to the office to fix the matter up with that young superintendent. Tom greeted him cordially, and he began:

"Now, look-a-here, Mr. Wilkins, how's't about my gal's papers!"

"I am very sorry that I can not place you, and do not know which one of the young ladies who wrote the examination is your daughter," said Tom.

The visitor introduced himself and went on to expatiate upon the merits of his first-born. According to his story, she was certainly a prodigy in everything, and knew vastly more than any one in the county had ever known before, or would ever know again. Been a county superintendent? Then you know how it is. She was away ahead of the other "gals" and

had often helped the teacher out when that person got "stalleded" on some knotty point.

While all this was being said, Tom had gone through the papers and had discovered that while this young lady was probably all that a fond parent had pictured her to be, she had not "put it down on the paper" as Tom had assured them they would have to do if they expected to get credit for their knowledge. He said nothing, but allowed his visitor to "run down," and then kept his eyes fixed upon the papers while he knew he was being stared at by his visitor, who was wondering why he did not immediately write out that certificate. When the irate visitor had had time to cool off a little, Tom said:

"Here are your daughter's papers. I am ready to go over them with you, if you think you are capable of passing judgment upon them, or I will go over them with your daughter in your presence, and if she is one-half as intelligent as you say she is, I'll convince her in a few minutes that she received as high an average as her work warranted."

Then Tom read over some of the questions and the young lady's answers to them and was

interrupted several times by the fond parent's saying that Jane knew better than that but had just failed to write it down, probably being in a state of excitement. Seeing clearly that his daughter had omitted several important things that she should have included in her work—if she knew them—and feeling that Tom was not to be touched by criticising his judgment, the visitor changed his tactics somewhat and reminded Tom that he was one of the committeemen in ——— township, and had just about been responsible for Tom's election.

“Well,” said Tom, “you wanted me to do my duty, did you not? You would not expect me to write certificates in return for votes, would you? Besides, my majority was more than one, and I should have still been elected if you had voted the other way. Let me say to you plainly that your daughter will receive a certificate when she shows by her work that she is worthy of one, and not before.”

The gentleman went away in a surly mood, and yet somewhat perplexed at the firmness Tom had exhibited. Let us add that Jane came back to the next examination, apologized to Tom

for what her father had said, assuring him that she knew she had not passed, but her father could not be reconciled to the fact that his daughter had failed, adding that she had tried to keep him from coming. Jane received a certificate the next year after having spent three terms in a training school, and is now one of the best lady teachers in the county.

Do you believe she would have been if Tom had humored her political "Pa?" Perhaps you do, but we do not.

Would it be surprising to you to learn that this old gentleman developed into one of Tom's warmest supporters, and would often silence a semblance to criticism by remarking that "Tom might make mistakes, like every one else does, but he is honest at heart, and if you go to him he'll not dodge you"?

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RECREATION. LIBRARY PLANS.

The bright, sunny spring days came, when all nature seemed in bloom, and the earth covered up the scars of a rather rough winter with a coat of velvet green interspersed with the richest flowers of nature's handiwork. These days lured Tom into the country amidst rich fields, along sparkling brooks, in the deep, dense forest that bordered a small river near his home. Here he took in the full enjoyment of Nature's rejuvenation, and felt younger and more vigorous himself. The scent of the wild flowers intoxicated him. What more lovely thing has God made than a perfect flower? The great Beecher has said that "Flowers are the sweetest things that God ever made and forgot to put a soul into." Flowers are to Nature what poetry is to the human soul. These sentiments found an echoing chord in the breast of Tom Wilkins on a bright May morning as he strolled listlessly along the green banks of the swiftly gliding

stream that he had visited many a time in his youth.

He could not just understand why the close communion with Nature in the wild primæval state in which he found her this morning should produce such pleasant thoughts, or cause such a feeling of relief. He had just, as he thought, laid aside the many cares of his official work and taken a recreation; had cut himself away from all the ills that affect the public school system, the indifference of the general public as to the kind of schools they send their children to, the scheming of small-souled people who believe that the schools are in existence for their pecuniary benefit, or the benefit of some of their relatives, the political prejudices which otherwise good men allow to control their actions, the criticism of those who are not capable of criticising, and the thousand and one ills, "too numerous to mention," that those who undertake the divine work of teaching are heirs to. All of these he had just laid aside for the time and found himself in the pure elements of Nature along the wooded banks of the sparkling stream that kept up its untiring murmur as it rolled on

toward the sea, just as it had done for years and years and years, when it slaked the thirst and cooled the brow of the Indian hunter before the white man had thought out a path across the trackless deep to found new empires in a virgin world.

Somehow this river typified the flow of educational influence to him. While the waters that now form the river are not the identical particles that formed it years ago, so the teachers that now conduct the schools are not the teachers of the past, or of the future (except in influence), but still the educational system must flow on, and increasingly keep up its forward movement to arrive at its destination—the betterment of the human race.

To be sure there are many snags and obstructions in the way of both, and many places where the progress seems almost imperceptible, but the school system must take a lesson from the river, and pass by what obstructions it can not remove, and leave them behind to be met and contended with by future comers. But progress must not cease.

Tom could not avoid making the above obser-

vations, for while he had determined to take a half-day to himself in the deep wild woods, he could not altogether lay aside thoughts that had occupied all his time for so long. You know that when teachers have company they talk school, and when they are alone they think school, and they just can't help it.

The result of his half-day's recreation was a determination to move along the lines of what he thought was right for the schools, and to try to advance the cause of education a little during his brief opportunity.

One day while in his office thinking over the work in general and wondering what he might do to help the work materially, he recalled his first effort at securing a library for the little school in district 6. How many times his mind went back to the pleasant remembrances of that little educational institution! He could not think but that if the children had plenty of good, wholesome reading they would develop more rapidly, become broader, and the schools would lay the foundation for that culture that comes only from the persistent reading of good books. He would be pleased beyond description

if every school in the county had a suitable library of its own. But he knew that was impracticable at present. The shyness of directors about spending money for books, the indifference of the teachers in the work of creating a sentiment in favor of good books, and the opposition of parents who did not understand and could not understand the situation, all lay in the way of his plans. How could he create that demand from his office? After thinking over it some time, this is the way he settled it in his own mind.

He would undertake to place a county central library in his office, to be supplied with good books graded to suit the needs of the pupils. From this library every teacher in the county might select a few books, take them to the school, interest the pupils in them, have them read, talked about, taken to the homes of the parents in the evenings and over Sundays.

But how could he do all this? He must take the teachers into his confidence, enlist their sympathies in the cause, and then call upon them to make such donations from their own collections as they could well spare, and this

should be the beginning of a library that should grow and make its influence felt for good in every nook and corner of the county.

At the annual Institute Tom made a talk on the subject of a central library and by his earnestness and his solid arguments succeeded in starting the move off at once. Later in the Institute, one afternoon while Tom was temporarily absent from the room, a meeting of the County Association was called and that body pledged itself to raise quite a large sum of money to be expended for books for the central library before the close of the next school year.

This money was to be secured by entertainments, pie socials, box suppers, etc., in fact, in any way possible. When Tom heard of this move he was somewhat agreeably surprised. He had not expected his plan to meet such hearty approval.

Of course, there were those who ridiculed the idea, and those who objected to the people of the county collecting a lot of books to be stored up in the court house for the benefit of the immediate community. So very narrow are some people that if you wished to fence them

in you would have to make a solid wall around them or they would slip out through the cracks. These criticisms did not bother Tom for he knew that they did not understand the plan. He had a lot of handy little library boxes made that could be carried easily, and large enough to contain from five to ten books each. This number he thought would be as many as any school would want at one time. They could be exchanged every month or oftener if the teacher thought proper.

During the Institute Tom made several wholesome talks. One was a plea for higher education. He argued that the broader the information the better the teacher. Teachers should know a great deal more than they undertake to teach. Culture broadens life and will broaden one's usefulness in any walk of life. Superficial knowledge, just enough to get along with, is not inspiring. Teachers can never lead pupils along the inspiring, soul-filling paths of life unless they have made the journey themselves. They can not cause pupils to see and enjoy the beauties of higher living—living under the influence of the masters—unless they,

themselves, have lived under that influence and tasted those beauties.

While he made a few talks along this sober line of thinking, he also made some other talks, which were punctuated with a considerable amount of spice and caused the teachers to be glad when the superintendent arose for a few remarks. Isn't this just a little in contrast with some things and some superintendents you know something about? Haven't you known some superintendents who bored their teachers with useless harangues? Well, Tom had known some such, and had decided that he should study to avoid making his talks tiresome or too frequent.

CHAPTER XIX.

DIFFICULTIES FOR ADJUSTMENT.

Tom was social with his fellow superintendents, loved to visit them and their institutes, made some pointed remarks that gained him many friends among the teachers of his part of the state. Just as it will broaden you to visit other schools than your own, so it broadened Tom to see the work of other counties. He found by observation that his county was not the most backward, and when one evening several superintendents had gathered in the office of the one they were visiting, and "swapped" experiences, he found he had no harder time than the others were having and that his teachers were as loyal to him as the teachers of the other counties were to their superintendents.

They drifted into a talk on the subject of the examination of applicants, and it was argued by some of them that the work of the schools of the state could be greatly improved by having a system of examining that took the work prac-

tically out of the hands of the county superintendents. But such a change would necessitate the enactment of suitable legislation, and every one knows that school legislation of the right kind is very hard to get.

The summer went by rapidly enough and Tom's annual report was sent to the state superintendent in due time, the few little errors that had crept into it corrected, and almost before he realized it he was visiting schools again. He worked away diligently, encouraging the teachers to systematize their work and get it nearer and nearer to the state course of study which was being used in all the schools with results proportionate to the zeal and ability of the teacher.

He had come to a full realization of the fact that whatever progress the schools made would necessarily be made gradually, that radical changes would work disastrously for the schools. The people had to be educated up to the standard that the schools were to attain, and educating the people in general is very much like educating the children—a matter of growth, and frequently very slow growth at that. Dis-

couragements did not check his desire to realize all the good things he wanted to realize.

When he arrived at his home late one evening, he found a telegram summoning him to a distant part of the county intimating some trouble that he was expected to settle. He obeyed the summons the next morning, and when he arrived at the place he found the school closed with the teacher and the board deadlocked over a point in discipline. One of the boys had become obstreperous, and the teacher having made only a partial success in his attempt to administer the proper punishment had sent the boy home. The boy had appealed to the school board and one of the directors had told him to go back to school. The teacher objected unless the boy made reparation of some kind, and finding that the board meant to take the side of the boy, promptly left his room and told the board that he would not teach so long as that boy was permitted to remain without having made due amends to the school.

This was the situation that Tom found. Do you not believe that his experience in difficulties of the same kind in the years gone by were of

great use to him in attempting to bring these warring factions together? He started into his talk to the board with the teacher present by saying that a good compromise is better than a judgment. Then he argued with them that they could each afford to give up a little in the interest of the school. He told the teacher that he could afford to allow the boy to return to school on the guarantee of the board that his conduct should be right. He told the board that it was no less than their duty to go to the school house in a body and notify those boys who might be thoughtless in the future that the board thoroughly supported the teacher, and that they were only permitted to attend upon the express condition that their conduct should be right. After talking over it in this way the matter was adjusted and the school was moving smoothly within an hour after Tom's arrival in the place. Tom took occasion while the board was present to give the school a wholesome talk that did good for all concerned, for it came from an honest heart and it appealed to people who were entirely reasonable when they laid their anger aside.

One day a few weeks after the incident above related, as Tom alighted from a railroad train in a neighboring town, he was accosted by a member of the board of education, who wanted to see him about a particularly "tough" room in their school. The boys had already run one lady teacher out of that room and had the second one about on the eve of leaving. Tom heard his story through, went up to the school and visited that particular room. He found the conditions even worse than he had expected.

He called the board of education together and gave them a sound sensible talk upon school government, which resulted in the entire board going to the school in a body and laying the law down to those mischievous boys, informing them that they would lose their permission to attend school if they did not yield obedience to the teachers. To clinch their statement they ordered one boy who had been the bell sheep in most of the mischief to leave the room and not to return until they gave him permission. This caused the boys to see things in a different light. They had hardly realized that there was any one in authority over them than the teacher.

A few weeks later Tom passed through the same place and meeting the president of the board asked him about the room. The president told him that everything was sailing smoothly, and also confessed that in his opinion the board was almost wholly to blame for the partial failure that room had made. You may be sure Tom was glad to hear this vindication of his theory that it takes the teacher and the board all pulling in the same direction to make a school a success.

Think it over, ye who were reared in a school where teachers were hired because of their abundance of brawn, with little consideration to the amount of brain. Is not the influence of the directors a most important factor in the management of any school?

The argument had been made to him that this process was apt to prevent some boy from acquiring an education, thus casting him upon society ignorant and vicious from the education of the street. Well, that is one way to look at it, and Tom thought seriously over it, but he could not believe that it is right to let one pupil whose moral sense was very imperfect to so

disturb and disorganize a school as to prevent twenty or thirty others from acquiring that education to which they are entitled.

Would a pupil who is spending all his time and energy in mischief ever acquire an education? Wouldn't it be just as well to drop him out awhile at least, and allow him to reflect over the results of his conduct? And wouldn't the example be good for the rest of the school by deterring other possible recalcitrants and giving the others an opportunity to work uninterrupted by disagreeable scenes? Of course, the pupil who has been temporarily deprived of his educational opportunities should know that he can return to school at any time that his pride and ill-temper are sufficiently humiliated to allow him to make proper amends, and on the pledge of the strictest obedience.

It is a criticism on the boasted civilization of any community in which a lady is not permitted to teach school on account of unruly boys who are often upheld and encouraged by careless, unthinking parents.

CHAPTER XX

REFLECTIONS. "WHAT NEXT?"

Tom Wilkins was of a reflective disposition. One day he found himself in his office with his correspondence cleared up, his records properly made, in fact his present duties about rounded up. He fell to thinking of the business of teaching in general. He reviewed his own career, and looked at the work of other young men who had started life as he did and at about the same time. He called to mind a young man who had been a seat-mate of his in school, who had entered a mercantile life, studied his business diligently, kept at it persistently, and was now accounted one of the most successful business men in the county and was able to write his name at the bank for a sum many times larger than Tom could. Tom wondered if the merchant had spent his time any more devotedly in his calling than a conscientious teacher does in his. You know he had not. You know that the amount of energy

necessary to make a successful teacher—we said successful—would be sufficient to make him a first-class business man if he had the least adaptability to business.

Besides, when one has followed most any business for a number of years, he reaches the place where he can take life easier, except in teaching. The longer you teach, the less desirable your services are, except in the very highest walks of the profession. In the grades and in the rural districts, you are too apt to be jostled out of the way by some young aspirant, fresh from college, who will be supposed to put new life into the school, and no matter how hard you may work, the very approach of years will bring the stigma of "old fogey," and pave the way for your release, and then what?

After you have given the best years of your life in the education of the youth and find that you are now at such an age that you cannot readily adjust yourself to some other profession, you discover that you must sacrifice the pleasure of residing on the old homestead to which you have become attached and roam out into the wide world and seek a position where you are

not known, perhaps in a distant and likely undesirable part of the country. Then you move your family to the community for a year, having no assurance that you will be permitted to remain any longer, and really having no positive assurance that you will be permitted to remain that long.

In what other business would men invest capital for the assurance of no more than one year of business? Tom had talked in this way to several young men who had thought of teaching, and had the satisfaction of seeing several of them in whom he was greatly interested, located in permanent positions with good salaries. Positions that to be kept only required that the person do his duty honestly; positions which were controlled by men who recognized that the person who gives good satisfaction and takes an interest in the work is the person to keep at the work; positions that are not subject to the caprice of fickle persons who sometimes cast the deciding vote at school elections. He knew these boys were better off than he was.

For when his term of office expires, then what? Why, he must take the risk of re-elec-

tion, with all the inconveniences of the campaign and the treachery of those who continue to slay Abel, whose prejudices cause them to cast their ballot for any one except the one who started into life with chances equal to their own and has by dint of hard work and untiring efforts, out-distanced them in the success attained. You know there are persons who do not like you just because you have not wasted your opportunities as they have done theirs. Misery loves company, and feels envious of anything more successful than itself.

From these thoughts he easily drifted into the consideration of the qualifications necessary to a successful teacher. The statutes lay down the qualifications necessary from a literary standpoint. In fact, if the law is carried out it is not easy to become a teacher. It requires quite a fund of knowledge. Tom knew that it also requires many other things besides knowledge. It requires tact, judgment, earnestness, a real desire to do good, a high aim and an unimpeachable character to make a successful teacher. He argued that all these things are required to make a successful superintendent,

and some more. His education can not be too broad, his love for the work must not stop short of devotion, and he must be more or less indifferent to criticism, at least he must not worry over it. For, if he does, he will not do much besides. The most conscientious things he does will find some one in a critical mood. The very things that are really of the greatest benefit will be mis-interpreted by some for one purpose or another. Even some teachers, who desire to solidify themselves with some school board that is critical and get the school, will allow themselves to criticise the superintendent to further their own ends, not knowing that weakening the head of the educational interests of the county weakens their very profession. Some will also criticise the present incumbent, no matter who he may be, in the hope of bringing him into disfavor, and perhaps help a voting public to see that the critical one would make a better superintendent than the one who is criticised.

Then Tom began to think of the qualifications of a superintendent from a legal stand-point. In the great state of Illinois, he must be either

a male or a female over the age of twenty-one years, but he does not need to know his alphabet, so far as literary qualifications are concerned, and he may be a worn-out lawyer, doctor, or demagogue, or most anything thing else. He might even be a candidate who had failed to secure some other political position to which he had aspired and was given this nomination to appease him and his friends. He is not required to have any experience as a teacher; he does not need the judgment necessary to discriminate between the good teachers and the other kind. Isn't it about time the great state of Illinois—and some others, for that matter—did something about the matter?

Oh, you say the people would not elect an incompetent over a professional teacher to so important an office! Well, you have our sympathy; you know very little about politics.

In looking over the law, he discovered that even school directors are required to be able to read, but there is nothing more required of the superintendent who is to direct the educational forces of the county and work for the advancement of the schools, than to be able to get votes.

Under these conditions it is not at all surprising that much of the best talent in the profession seeks positions elsewhere when they give the matter serious consideration. In fact, Tom almost believed that that teacher is most fortunate who seeks employment elsewhere before he is too far advanced in years to be useful. His teaching will have proven a good thing for him for it will fix his education and if he can then secure a position that yields a fair remuneration with some promise of permanency he will have some opportunity to use what he has gained in a way that shall make his life comfortable.

Why this state of affairs when everyone knows that the brightest minds and the loftiest characters are needed in the divine work of teaching and supervision?

Tom followed these reflections with the consolatory thought that the whole-souled, good-hearted, self-sacrificing teachers of the country would keep the conditions from getting as deplorable as they could get under so imperfect a system of education.

CHAPTER XXI.

A POLITICAL TRAP.

But let us not get gloomy as Tom did in his reflections in the previous chapter. Life is too short to spend in fretting over things that do not go to suit us. There are real pleasures to be found in the work of the teacher. What a wonderfully satisfying thing it is to be able to lead some bright mind into higher walks of life. If it were not for the love of teaching entertained by so large a portion of our educators the profession would be lacking in people to fill the positions.

In the school year that followed Tom found that the usual twenty-five percent of the teachers had left the profession and their places had been filled with young teachers for the most part. Some of these had had a term or two of Normal training, but most of them were fresh from the schools of the county. He had talked to them at the Institute and the teachers' meetings; had tried to impress them with the im-

portance of the work they were undertaking, the necessity of doing the very best for the pupils under their control.

In visiting the schools he tried to call upon these young teachers as early in the term as possible, thinking that what help he could be to them would be of greater importance if it came early than if it came at the close of the term.

Often he would take charge of a class and conduct a recitation, or he would give the school a wholesome talk, and his experience had been such that his talks always made a good impression, and the teacher and the pupils were glad for him to take a part of their time. The pupils were encouraged to greater efforts, and the teacher almost invariably said that teaching was easier after he had made the school a talk than it was before.

He met many school officers and patrons on his rounds of visitation, and took such opportunities as offered to say a word that would be for the good of the cause of education. You know that a person of his genial disposition and earnestness is always sure to have many friends. His friends were proud of him, and more than

one of them intimated that he would be required to make the race again at the close of the present term. Tom said nothing about his future prospects or his desires in the matter. He knew secretly that he was always happiest when he resolved never to tamper with politics again. But still he did not know what he should do about it. He appreciated the friendship of his friends.

One day while Tom was thinking over these things and many others (for he was always thinking about something pertaining to schools when he was awake) he was greeted by a gentleman who came into his office rather suddenly. He was from some remote part of the county. His son had taken the examination twice and had failed each time, and he had come to talk to the superintendent about it. He seemed awkward and embarrassed, not being accustomed to approaching officials on official business, for his humble walks of life in an agricultural district did not lead him often to the court house.

He asked Tom timidly what he thought of his boy.

“Why,” said Tom frankly, “I think he is a

fine boy and you ought to be very proud of him, but he is not ready to teach school. He needs to go to school more. I havn't a doubt that he will some day be able to pass the examination, and I feel sure that he has the qualities that should make him a good teacher some day, but he needs training."

"That might all be as you say," replied the visitor, "but he is so anxious to teach the home school this year to earn a little money for himself, that I promised him I would see you about it. You see he knows that my family is large and somewhat expensive and he does not like to be any more expense to me, so he thought if he could get a school he could help himself to go away to school next spring."

"He certainly shows the right spirit," said Tom, "and I feel like encouraging him, but it would be much better for him to go away to school before he begins teaching, and get ready for the work. Then he can have some hope of climbing in the work. I am a firm believer in the theory that we should prepare BEFORE we begin."

"Well, now," said the visitor, "I think, too,

that would probably be better, but he has his heart so set upon it that I hate to disappoint him, and I would be willing to pay you something extra to get him through this year."

Before Tom knew what he was about he almost lost his temper. The audacity of a full-grown man making such a proposition to him! If the statement had come from the boy or from some others that he knew of he would not have been so much surprised. He proceeded to speak his mind very plainly on the curse of official bribery, and asked his visitor if he thought him that kind of an official. He timidly answered that he did not, and that he would not have made the proposition if one of his friends had not told him that he had "worked" county superintendents that way before. Tom pressed him so closely that he learned the name of the one who had given such advice. The visitor had promised not to give the name, but Tom had shrewdly drawn it from him.

He recognized the name at once, and knew that its possessor had worked very hard against him in the campaign, that he was an all-around political schemer, and would have wanted noth-

ing better than this to use against Tom in a future political campaign. How easily a less thoughtless person might have fallen into the trap!

A quiet talk followed in which Tom told his visitor how important it is that a teacher be strictly honest, and that if his boy should receive a certificate under such false circumstances he might develop into a rascal and drift into a life of crime, winding up perhaps in the state prison. Tom talked feelingly and made the right kind of an impression on his visitor, who said:

"I know you are right, and I shall send my boy away to school next winter. I can hardly spare the money but I will squeeze through some way. I can better go to some inconvenience than take the risk of ruining my boy. I want to thank you for the kind words you have said, and while you and I hold opposite political views, I pledge to support you should you ever be a candidate again."

The visitor left and we assure you that Tom felt much better and happier than if he had put many dollars of corrupt money into his pocket.

He felt that he had acted the man and had proven to a doubting Thomas that there are still men in the world; men who can not be bribed into doing what they know to be wrong. We do enough of things wrong through ignorance without increasing the number by deliberately perjuring ourselves.

It is safe to say that Tom had gained one more very warm friend as a result of his manhood, and had in one community a friend who would stand by him against all calumny that might come up, and it comes up sometimes, especially in political campaigns.

Tom could not help thinking that, even leaving himself out of the question, it would be much better for the school system if the office of county superintendent could be divorced from politics. But he knew the old politicians would never willingly submit to this, for they wanted the aspirant to that office to contribute largely to the campaign funds, and if the office were taken out of politics, they could not "trade" on the "tail of the ticket." You say they never do such things? Take a few lessons from practical personal experience and see!

CHAPTER XXII.

A PEDAGOGUE IN A JUSTICE'S COURT.

While passing along one of the streets of the county seat one day, Tom overheard one of a crowd of "curbstone ornaments," such as may be found in almost every county seat in Southern Illinois, and in some other states, say to the others, "I tell you that fellow has a soft snap," referring to Tom, whose passing had called him to mind. Tom walked on apparently not hearing the remark, but he "laughed up his sleeve."

Yes, indeed, it is a snap to ride out in the coldest, rawest, most disagreeable weather to visit schools; to keep all the troubles of all the districts in the county on your mind at once; to examine and pass upon applicants and know that almost every one who fails will be a political and personal enemy forever after, and yet to know that to license all the crude material that applies would be the ruination of the schools, both as to salary and usefulness; to hear petty complaints and answer petty letters, which,

while they did not seem to be of much importance, still can not be neglected; indeed, all of these, and many others not here enumerated, constitute a "snap" of the first water.

Such is a too common opinion of the work of a county superintendent, and yet if the duties be properly performed there is no more important work, nor any that can produce greater results for the upbuilding of our great American Institutions, than the work of the county superintendent.

Going farther down the street he noticed a curious, gaping crowd gathered in front of the office of a local justice of the peace on the opposite side of the street. He did not cross over for he did not wish to bring forth any more uncharitable remarks. From a friend whom he met he learned that the city superintendent of schools was being tried on a charge of assault, his offense being the punishing of a boy for insubordination to the rules of the school.

The trial ended as the two talked about the case and a shout from a crowd of half-grown boys who had played "hookey" to hear the trial, told them too plainly that the judgment

of the court was against the superintendent. Tom did not discuss the merits of the case with his friend, or question the justice of the judgment from a strictly legal point of view, but he remarked that the encouragement to disobedience that this episode would give the restless element of the school would hurt the city much more than the payment of a paltry fine would hurt the city superintendent. For he was not tied there for life and could go elsewhere if he wished to, but the city is permanent and the restless class will always be present and with this kind of encouragement are apt to develop in such a manner as to furnish more or less work for the criminal courts of the future.

So it is that the path of progress is blocked at many points. After the educational influences of a county have worked earnestly and made some slow progress, some such incident as the above is precipitated and a backward step is taken from which it requires time to recover.

Tom could not help thinking that if the restless element in that school could be made to understand that their privilege of attending school depended upon their conduct, and that if

their parents also thoroughly understood the the same point, the discipline of the school would be much better, and the influence for good be increased.

Notwithstanding all these gloomy features, Tom continued cheerful and was just as anxious as ever to do as much as possible to advance the cause of education.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COUNTY GRADUATION.

As we have remarked before, Tom was social with his fellow superintendents and lost no opportunity of meeting with them on any occasion that might prove of mutual benefit. On one of those bright and delightful June days with which Southern Illinois is particularly blessed, one of those balmy days that excite in one the real joy of living, whose cooling breezes and beautiful sunshine, together with the sweet perfume of roses, the sight of the beautiful green grasses and the joyful songs of a thousand birds make one exult and induce the liveliest and most pleasant thoughts; it was on one of these days that Tom had met with a dozen other county superintendents in a neighboring city to discuss the educational problems of the hour and endeavor to find some solution for at least a few of the puzzling things that had suggested themselves to one and another of the superintendents.

Tom always found these conferences helpful, and had learned that the other superintendents were meeting with much the same obstacles that he was finding on his rounds of visitation and in his office work. He had felt that this must be true, for human nature does not change with county lines, and it had occurred to him that it must change to a considerable extent to get rid of some of the things that obstruct the real progress of education.

He noticed, too that there was variety among the county superintendents. There were a few of the pompous, know-it-all kind, who imagined that when they had spoken upon any given subject that that exhausted it. They had not come to ask questions, but to answer them. But Tom did not let this bother him or keep him from getting a great deal of good out of these meetings. For he had lived long enough in the world and his experience had been sufficiently varied for him to conclude that no one person had a monopoly of the world's knowledge.

After discussing a number of subjects and about exhausting the topics the various superintendents had noted down on their slips and

brought with them for enlightenment, one of the superintendents asked the assembly what they thought of the new county graduation project that had been tried in a number of the central and northern counties of the state. Now Tom had had this subject upon his mind some time and wanted to introduce it into his county. He had read extensive reports of several county graduations in some of his favorite school journals and the matter impressed him very favorably.

It developed that he had about as much information on the subject as anyone else present, and he was asked to outline the plan.

The plan called for the graduation of pupils from the eighth grade to the high schools, and particularly for the graduation of pupils of the rural schools where there was nothing higher than the eighth grade. The argument in favor of it was that pupils would have a definite aim in their work and having achieved it would be ready to enter high school somewhere. Ever since the school system had been organized in Illinois the country schools had closed each year without anything special to mark the

progress that had been made. In fact, the larger pupils having been over the same studies a number of times, had become weary of the monotony, having no particular goal for their ambitions, had very little ambition, and being useful on the farm had dropped out of school long before the term ended. Sometimes they gathered at the school house on the closing day and listened to the "pieces" of the little ones and joined in the few songs attempted on the last day, and sometimes they took their baskets of dinner along and enjoyed a school picnic in the grove. But there was nothing of educational achievement to mark the end of the term.

The county graduation was intended to relieve all this feeling of awkwardness and uncertainty as to what had been accomplished and give a new impetus to school work. The county superintendent was to prepare a set of examination questions and distribute them to the various townships. The pupils who had passed the eighth grade examination successfully in the various schools of the township were admitted to the final examination in the town school or one of the larger country schools in the town-

ship. This examination was placed in charge of one of the teachers and all the teachers of the township were expected to be present and assist in grading the papers. After these papers were graded by the teachers they were all transmitted as graded to the county superintendent to be examined and passed upon by him and the pupils notified of the result.

At a given date the successful pupils were asked to come to the county seat and participate in the graduating exercises of the county, which were to consist of certain literary efforts on the part of the pupils themselves, if the class were not too large, or a class address by some distinguished educator if the first plan were not practicable. As far as the plan had been used these exercises had been held in connection with the county Institute.

Tom told of a county in which graduating exercises were conducted that year. The county was about the size of his own and the class had numbered fourteen from the various schools of the county. The reports that he had read of it said that the examination had been very complete and all the papers had been carefully

criticised by the teachers and again by the superintendent. The class had acquitted itself very creditably and there was an uplift of educational spirit as a result of it, and Tom told his hearers that he intended to work out the scheme in his county the next year.

At the close of Tom's remarks, which had impressed all who heard them with the thoroughness with which he had handled the subject, another superintendent arose and said it would probably be well for the assembly to hear a little of the other side of the subject. He told of a certain county in the state in which the county graduating system had been instituted by a very conscientious superintendent who had worked along the very lines Tom had explained with good results. This superintendent was succeeded later by another less conscientious, who saw that he could "work" the graduating "racket" to increase his popularity and probably perpetuate himself in office. Several things he would change though. He would have more graduates and please more families. So he threw down the high standard that his predecessor had established, made his examinations

more or less of a sham and a farce, saying that, of course, the pupils are not all perfect, none of us are. "The master's degree lies farther on."

The result was the few graduates of his predecessor jumped to seventy-five the first time he tried it and passed the hundred mark the second year and kept on increasing. And the state superintendent addressed the class and the parents attended and everyone praised the county superintendent.

Of course, some of these pupils were bright and did well, and later made good records in high schools they attended, but many of them never saw the inside of a school room again as students, having graduated and feeling that going to the home school another year would be humiliating, did not go, though, in fact, it would have done them good to do so.

When the speaker had closed his criticism, Tom took the floor again and said that while he recognized that there were some small men in the county superintendent's office occasionally, and while some persons might, for personal reasons, abuse the matter of graduation, still he believed there is much merit in the system if

honestly conducted. We would not get anywhere if we stopped just because some persons abused their opportunities to do a world of good just in order to hold a grip upon an office, and he closed by saying again that he meant to try the plan.

The meeting, which had been very beneficial to all, closed and Tom's outline and defense of the plan elicited much favorable comment.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN CONCLUSION.

We have told this much of the story of Tom Wilkins for the encouragement of those youth of humble birth who need encouragement, for those teachers who are plodding along against the trials that beset those who undertake to train the youth of the land, for the awakening of the parents to the sense of the obligations that rest upon them in the matter of educating their children, and for the purpose of bringing to the minds of members of boards of directors the importance of co-operation with the teachers and the union of sentiment that should exist among those who have charge of the educational system of the community. If we have succeeded in causing some one to think seriously over the problems of school, our aim has been attained. If we have dropped a hint that will encourage some educational wayfarer, we are happy at the result.

Let us understand that Tom is wiser than

ever he was before, and with his term drawing to a close in the midst of success, and the skirmish line of another campaign forming, he is overflowing with a desire to leave the schools in a prosperous condition should he decide to stay out of the arena of politics.

In a comfortable home of their own with a few of the luxuries of life, and with loving hearts that look always to each other's comfort, with the higher ideals of life held forth and the baser things excluded, let us leave Tom and his happy family with hope that this much of the story of his life and work and the picture of true happiness that exists in this rather model American home shall be of some encouragement to some who read these pages.

May all the good they have tried to bring to others be returned to them as they advance in years, and may the remembrance of these official years be pleasant to them the rest of their days!

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